

## Mission/Vision Statement and Funding

### Union County Public Schools (900) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0

\* LEA Superintendent's Name:

Houlihan, Andrew - andrew.houlihan@ucps.k12.nc.us

\* LEA AIG Contact Name:

Sullivan, Danielle - danielle.sullivan@ucps.k12.nc.us ➔

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. 115C:150.5).

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)

UCPS envisions a student-centered gifted education program that recognizes and nurtures advanced academic and intellectual potential across our student population. The program seeks to create and increase access to rigorous learning experiences that empower students to thrive.

Our mission is to implement a comprehensive and collaborative AIG program that:

- Identifies gifted potential through research-based practices
- Delivers appropriately challenging instruction and enrichment opportunities
- Integrates gifted services with district priorities, and
- Nurtures students' growth, supports self-management skills, and encourages lifelong learning

### FUNDING FOR LOCAL AIG PROGRAM (as of 2025)

State Funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other Funding
* \$ 2,517,900.00	* \$ 672,500.00	* \$ 0.00	* \$ 0.00

## Standard 1: Student Identification

### Union County Public Schools (900) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0

#### **Standard 1: Student Identification**

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

\* **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.

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) employs comprehensive referral and screening processes to identify academically or intellectually gifted (AIG) and talent development students across all grade levels (K-12). These processes, which include universal screening efforts, provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their strengths and talents when being considered for gifted services.

#### **Referral Process**

The referral process allows individuals to nominate students for the screening process. Nominations can come from various sources, including teachers, parents, administrators, school counselors, community members, or the students themselves.

For students who have been at UCPS and were screened during our annual screening process, a referral may be submitted within the first six weeks of school. For students who are new to the district, a referral form should be submitted within the first six weeks from their start date.

The process is outlined as follows:

**1. Complete a Referral Form:**

- Available at each school and downloadable from the AIG Department Website.
- During the school year, forms should be submitted to the AIG Teacher, Data Manager, or school counselor.
- During summer, forms can be emailed to [aigsummertesting@ucps.k12.nc.us](mailto:aigsummertesting@ucps.k12.nc.us) or faxed to 704-296-5009.

**2. Screening Process Initiation:**

- Upon receipt of the referral form, the recipient initiates the screening process to gather relevant data by contacting the AIG Department.
- When a student is newly enrolled at UCPS a screening is conducted using data shared by families or mailed from their previous district.

#### **Screening Process**

The screening process is a systematic collection and evaluation of qualitative and quantitative data to assess a student's potential eligibility for AIG services. Screening incorporates both universal measures and individual nominations.

Specific details include:

**1. Data Collection and Indicators:**

- All student data is documented in the AIG Screening Notebook for review.
  - Screening considers multiple types of evidence to build a comprehensive learner profile using: **Aptitude Indicators**: Standardized aptitude test scores; **Achievement Indicators**: EOG/EOC scores or other nationally normed assessments; and **Performance Indicators**: Portfolios, checklists, grades, and nationally normed rating scales such as the Gifted Rating Scale (GRS) or the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS).
- ## 2. Screening by Grade Levels:
- **Grades K-3 (Universal & Automatic)**: Screening is embedded in enrichment services at each school. No formal identification; focus is on talent development and observation.
  - **Grades 3-7 (Universal & Automatic)**: Aptitude assessment opportunity provided for all students in grades 3 & 6. The process uses BOG and EOG/EOC results and additional performance data to identify students for further testing or those that have met the identification criteria for services. Automatic Annual Screening begins in the second semester that includes evaluation of existing student data, such as standardized test scores, grades, and other academic performance indicators.
  - **Grades 8-12 (Self-Nomination Process)**: Students can self-nominate for a screening process by completing a referral form. Data from standardized testing, coursework and performance indicators are evaluated.
- ## 3. Screening Outcomes:
- Based on screening data, one of the following decisions is made:
- The student does not meet criteria for further evaluation but will be reconsidered in subsequent annual screenings.
  - The student needs additional testing to complete the learner profile.
  - The student meets identification criteria and is eligible for gifted services.

## New to the District

Students transferring into UCPS are screened upon enrollment using provided records and data points, including report cards, standardized test scores, and previous gifted identification documentation. The AIG Team reviews available information and determines whether further testing or immediate placement is appropriate. Parents receive written notification of the outcome of the screening process, if further testing is needed.

## Returning to the District

For students who are identified as AIG at UCPS that leave and return to the district, the screening process is bypassed as their prior UCPS AIG identification will be honored for continuity of services. Parents/Guardians will need to sign a new Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) to accept or decline services for their student.

## Data-Informed Identification Practices Across Contexts

To provide consistent identification opportunities for students from a range of backgrounds--including those from low-income households, multilingual learners (ML), twice-exceptional (2e) students, and those whose strengths may not be reflected in traditional assessments--UCPS employs additional strategies such as:

- **Collaborative Review**: AIG Teachers and school-based AIG teams meet with general education classroom teachers to multiple data points and identify potential candidates for gifted services or talent development.
- **Alternative Assessments**: Use of portfolios, observational tools, and nationally normed rating scales tailored to highlight student strengths.

- **Group Norms:** Consideration of school-specific norms to identify high-potential students for talent development pools and further evaluation.
- **Professional Development:** Ongoing training for UCPS staff to recognize gifted potential across a broad range of learners.

## Acceleration Candidates

Acceleration candidates are students referred for subject or whole-grade acceleration. They are evaluated using a structured process in grades (K-8):

1. **Referral:** Nominations are submitted through the school's AIG Teacher, school counselor or principal. Differentiation evidence is collected over a six-week observation period in the classroom with the teacher of record.
2. **Team Review:** The AIG Team reviews the data collected during the six week evaluation process and determines recommendations, such as testing or continued differentiation.
3. **Testing:** Additional testing is recommended if evidence from the Team Review supports a referral to testing. The type of assessment is dependent upon existing student data.
4. **Parent Communication:** Parents are involved throughout the process and provide consent for testing and services.

For students in grades 6-12, students can participate in the **Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM)** process that allows for students to earn high school course credit by demonstrating mastery of course material/content without taking the actual course. The application window typically opens in May. Students must complete the application by the established deadline to initiate the process.

- **Phase 1:** Students show proficiency on CDM assessment.
- **Phase 2:** Students create an artifact that demonstrates understanding of the content standards for non World Language Courses. For World Language Courses, students complete a second phase of testing to demonstrate their speaking and writing skills.

Middle school students may participate in the CDM process for those high school courses which are taught in middle school:

- English 1
- Math 1, 2, or 3
- World Language Levels 1 & 2

With the CDM process, all course prerequisites for both middle and high school students must be met prior to initiating the process.

UCPS provides referral and screening processes that are transparent and accessible, providing multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate their abilities and talents. UCPS utilizes universal screening, educator referrals, and targeted support strategies to develop a comprehensive learner profile that informs gifted identification and service planning.

### \* 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.

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) utilizes a comprehensive process for identifying AIG students across all grade levels, K-12. The identification process leverages multiple criteria, including both quantitative and qualitative measures, to reveal students' aptitude, achievement, and potential to achieve. These criteria are aligned with best practices in gifted education and are applied consistently to develop a comprehensive learner profile for each student. Identification practices are directly aligned with the services provided.

Our district uses a standardized, research-based screening and evaluation process for all of our students. While we understand that families may choose to pursue private testing, we are unable to accept outside assessments for gifted identification. This policy affirms that all students are evaluated using the same criteria, providing the same opportunity for identification and services.

Students in grades K-3 are universally screened at the school for enrichment and extension opportunities. These options are typically offered through the general education classroom.

### **Steps in the Identification Process (Grades 3-12):**

#### **1. Universal Screening:**

- Universal screening occurs annually for students enrolled in grades 3-7 starting with the second semester.
- Students that are new to UCPS are universally screened upon their enrollment.
- Multiple measures are used, including aptitude tests, achievement data, and additional performance indicators.
- Data is collected and evaluated to make further recommendations.
- Talent development screenings are school-based and use a body of evidence for students who demonstrate potential but do not initially meet identification criteria for gifted services.

#### **2. Referral Process**

- Any student can be referred for an AIG screening using a referral form and submit it to a school counselor, data manager, or AIG teacher at their school.

#### **3. Data Collection and Analysis:**

- Quantitative data includes aptitude and achievement test scores (e.g., EOG/EOC, nationally normed assessments).
- Qualitative data includes grades, portfolios, checklists, and rating scales.
- For talent development, schools may use additional data sources.

#### **4. Referral Process:**

- Students with data that meets the UCPS identification criteria qualify for gifted services.
- Students with data points that support a referral to AIG testing are invited to complete their learning profiles.
- Students who meet the school-based talent development criteria are served based on the school's School Enrichment Plan.

#### **5. AIG Testing Process:**

- Parents/Guardians are required to consent to further assessments.
- Once permission is granted, the student is assessed.

#### **6. AIG Team Review:**

- School-based AIG teams review the comprehensive learner profile for each referred student and complete an Alternative Assessment form for each student they are recommending for Pathway 3 consideration.
- Teams consider local norms, cultural/linguistic background, and individual circumstances.
- Teams also review the identification information for every student that participated in the AIG testing process.

#### **7. Pathway Determination:**

- Based on the review, students are identified under one of several pathways (detailed below).

## **8. Parent/Guardian Engagement:**

- Families are informed of identification decisions and provided opportunities to discuss, and accept or decline services.
- 9. Ongoing Monitoring:**
  - Students who are not identified are monitored for potential reconsideration as new data becomes available for the next school year.

### **Criteria for AIG Identification:**

UCPS categorizes gifted identification into six types, each with specific criteria:

1. **Intellectually Gifted (IG)**
2. **Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI)**
3. **Academically Gifted in Reading (AR)**
4. **Academically Gifted in Math (AM)**
5. **Academically Gifted in Both Reading and Math (AG)**
6. **Accelerated Student (AC)**

### **Pathway-Specific Criteria:**

#### **Pathway 1A: Intellectually Gifted (IG) in Reading, Math, or Both**

Designed for students with exceptional intellectual abilities but without matching achievement or performance indicators.

Requires:

- Full Scale Aptitude Score: 98th percentile or higher.
- Subtest Composite Score: 98th percentile or higher.
- Achievement Indicator: Below 89% grade or rating scale score.

#### **Pathway 1B: Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI) in Reading, Math, or Both**

For students with exceptional intellectual and academic abilities.

Requires:

- Full Scale Aptitude Score: 98th percentile or higher.
- Subtest Composite Score: 98th percentile or higher.
- Achievement Indicator: 98th percentile or higher.
- Performance Indicator: 90% or higher.

#### **Pathway 2: Academically Gifted in Reading (AR), Math (AM), or Both (AG)**

For students with a combination of intellectual and academic abilities. Requires three criteria within the same subject area for reading and/or mathematics, with one criteria meeting an aptitude requirement:

- Aptitude: 90th percentile or higher full scale score
- Aptitude: 90th percentile or higher composite subtest score

- Achievement: 90th percentile or higher
- Performance: 90% course grade or Gifted Rating Scale at 90th percentile or higher.

**Pathway 3: Alternative Pathway for Services in Reading (AR), Math (AM), or Both (AG)**

This pathway is intended for students whose abilities may be demonstrated in ways not reflected by standard assessments, utilizing tools such as portfolios and behavior rating scales to support a more comprehensive evaluation.

Requires three criteria within the same subject area for reading and/or mathematics with the option of having up to two different performance indicators:

- Aptitude: 87th percentile or higher.
- Achievement: 87th percentile or higher.
- Achievement: Grade of A
- Performance: 87th percentile on a checklist, rating scale, or portfolio

**Acceleration Students:**

Acceleration entails studying material earlier, or at a faster pace, than most students. There are a variety of ways that acceleration can be applied:

1. Early Admittance to Kindergarten
2. Subject Specific Acceleration
3. Whole Grade Acceleration

**Early Entrance to Kindergarten:**

The early entrance to kindergarten is part of state legislation under BH-1099. The process is designed to provide an opportunity for students to enter kindergarten early. The process is designed for students who are not only academically ready and advanced, but who are also demonstrating advanced characteristics socially, emotionally, and developmentally that would demonstrate readiness for the elementary classroom environment. Students who are ready for kindergarten early are advanced in multiple areas when compared to same-age peers, or other four-year-olds of the same birth month.

A child must meet all the listed criteria to be a candidate for early entrance to kindergarten.

- Student aptitude indicator of at least the 98th percentile
- Student achievement indicator of at least the 98th percentile
- Student performance indicator
- Observable student behavior/Student interest indicators (2 letters of recommendation & Social development checklist)
- Motivation/Student interest indicator: Parent & Student Interviews

Parents are responsible for arranging and paying for any testing for this process. All testing must occur after April 16th that follows the child's fourth birthday.

Completed applications are submitted with supporting documentation to the principal of the school within the first 30 calendar days of the school year. Parents can download the specifics of the process and the application from the AIG Department Website under Local Plan.

**Subject Acceleration:**

Subject acceleration means a student receives instruction at a higher-grade level with another group of students while remaining with their peer group for the remaining part of the instructional day. In most cases, a high-achieving student needs a differentiated curriculum to meet their learning needs, not subject acceleration.

A student must meet all the listed criteria to be a candidate for subject acceleration. A six-week evaluative process includes the use of curriculum compacting, differentiation strategies, enrichment, and/or extension of the standard course of study. These strategies are appropriate at any grade level.

If the student succeeds in meeting the qualitative components of the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS), the student enters the quantitative component assessments process of the IAS.

A student must meet all the criteria below to be subject accelerated:

1. Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) Requirements:
  - a. Qualitative Components (6 week evaluative period with current teacher of record)
    - i. School & Academic Factors
    - ii. Developmental Factors
    - iii. Interpersonal Skills
    - iv. Attitude & Support
  - b. Quantitative Components
    - i. Achievement Indicator: On grade level achievement test score of 95th percentile or higher in subject(s) to be accelerated
    - ii. Achievement Indicator: Two years above grade level on achievement test in subject(s) to be accelerated with a score of 75th percentile or higher
    - iii. Aptitude Indicator: Full Scale IQ = 125+ (administered by a licensed psychologist)
    - iv. Performance Indicator: IAS total score of 60 or more points.
2. Performance Indicator: Teacher/AIG Team Recommendation
3. Performance Indicator: Principal Recommendation
4. Consent: Parent Endorsement of Placement

If a parent is interested in having their student subject accelerated, contact the principal of the school.

#### **Whole Grade Acceleration:**

Whole grade acceleration involves skipping levels in the normal progression of school. It is only appropriate for highly gifted students. For a student to qualify for whole grade acceleration, the student must meet all the following criteria. This option is appropriate for highly gifted students.

A six-week evaluative process includes the use of curriculum compacting, differentiation strategies, enrichment, and/or extension of the standard course of study. These strategies are appropriate at any grade level.

If the student succeeds in meeting the qualitative components of the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS), the student enters the quantitative component assessments process of the IAS.

A student must meet all the listed criteria to be a candidate for whole grade acceleration:

1. Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) Requirements:
  - a. Qualitative Components (6-week evaluative period with current teacher of record)
    - i. School & Academic Factors
    - ii. Developmental Factors
    - iii. Interpersonal Skills
    - iv. Attitude & Support
  - b. Quantitative Components
    - i. Achievement Indicator: On grade level achievement test score of 95th percentile or higher in subject(s) to be accelerated

- ii. Achievement Indicator: Two years above grade level on achievement test in subject(s) to be accelerated with a score of 75th percentile or higher
- iii. Aptitude Indicator: Full Scale IQ = 130+ (administered by a licensed psychologist)
- iv. Performance Indicator: IAS total score of 60 or more points.

1. Performance Indicator: Teacher/AIG Team Recommendation
2. Performance Indicator: Principal Recommendation
3. Consent: Parent Endorsement of Placement

If a parent is interested in having their student whole grade accelerated, contact the AIG teacher, school counselor, or principal of the school.

### **Access for Identification Practices:**

UCPS employs the following strategies to provide access for all students:

1. Use local norms to account for demographic and contextual factors.
2. Build a body of evidence through talent development programs and work samples.
3. Incorporate non-traditional measures, such as checklists and rating scales.
4. Partner with Exceptional Children (EC), Multilingual Learner (ML), Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS), Title I personnel, and other support staff to gather comprehensive data on students' strengths.
5. Consider individual circumstances and potential barriers during data analysis.

### **Alignment with Services Provided:**

Identified students receive services tailored to their needs:

- **Differentiated Education Plans (DEP)** for all gifted students and acceleration students who have met the identification criteria.
- Acceleration options for highly gifted students, including subject or grade-level advancement.

The district reviews the effectiveness of services annually.

### **Parent and Staff Collaboration:**

UCPS prioritizes collaboration and communication by:

1. Involving families in the identification and service planning process.
2. Providing professional development for AIG staff, general education staff, administrators, and district leadership to support consistent application of identification practices.
3. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration to develop and evaluate comprehensive learner profiles.
4. Collaborating with district personnel to support the learning needs of advanced and gifted learners.

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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.

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) is committed to providing opportunities for all students—regardless of background—to participate in Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) programs when there is a demonstrated need. With a student population of approximately 42,000 for the 2024-25 school year, UCPS recognizes the importance of identification practices that respond to the district's demographics and address underrepresentation among specific groups.

The current district demographics show the following breakdown: 52% White, 12% African American, 21% Hispanic, 15% Other, with 37.8% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, 10.7% identified as Exceptional Children (EC), and 17% identified as Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG).

The demographic distribution of students served in the district's AIG program include 61% White, 4% African American, 10% Hispanic, and 25% Other, with 1% identified as twice-exceptional. Students from groups such as African American, Hispanic, low income, multilingual learners (ML), and twice-exceptional (2e) populations are identified at lower rates for AIG services. This demographic profile aligns with broader patterns in college and career readiness based on End-of Grade (EOG) performance data.

UCPS recognizes that increasing participation among student groups at lower rates requires intentional strategies rooted in data analysis, collaboration, and innovative programming. To support this effort, the district annually reviews enrollment patterns in gifted programs compared to overall school enrollment data. This ongoing analysis helps guide decisions related to screening, referral, and identification, making them more responsive to areas where adjustments may be needed.

Recognizing the need for targeted solutions, UCPS has embraced programs and practices designed to address the Excellence Gap. For example, the district participated in Talent Unleashed, a pilot initiative supported by the North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented. Through this program, a committee of educators and external partners received specialized training on identifying and nurturing gifted potential. The program's focus on building a pipeline of talent in Title I schools has laid the groundwork for identifying and including gifted learners early in talent development programs.

UCPS employs an automatic universal screening process that evaluates all students in grades 3-7. In addition to the universal screening process, the school-based AIG Team meets to recommend students for consideration using an Alternative Assessment Screening Process. This process allows the schools to consider students' unique circumstances. The Alternative Assessment Form facilitates the use of non-traditional measures of giftedness, including portfolios, the Gifted Rating Scale (GRS), the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS), and Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) Behavioral Profiles (BP). By recognizing gifted potential through multiple pathways, UCPS provides opportunities for students who may not excel through traditional assessments alone.

The AIG Department partners with schools that have less than 10% of their students identified for gifted services to examine local norms and identify students for talent development opportunities. This usually includes Title 1 schools and lower performing middle schools.

Schools serve a critical role in the identification and support of gifted learners. To strengthen this work, school-based AIG teams participate in annual professional development focused on recognizing the expressions of gifted potential and applying evidence-based best practices. This training emphasizes:

- Creating a culture of talent detectives within schools to uncover hidden gifted potential.
- Leveraging non-traditional indicators to recommend students for identification pathways.
- Supporting students through Pathway 3, an identification option tailored to recognize gifted learners who may otherwise be overlooked.

In addition to identification, UCPS focuses on school-based talent development as a proactive strategy to nurture gifted potential. Each school develops an AIG Services Enrichment Plan (SEP), which outlines specific goals for enrichment and talent development services. These goals may also be incorporated into each school's broader improvement plan. These plans include detailed methods for service delivery, measures of success, and opportunities for evaluation. Schools with fewer than 10% identified AIG students are encouraged to implement cluster grouping models, where gifted learners are placed in classrooms alongside advanced learners who benefit from enrichment opportunities beyond the AIG classroom. In addition to supporting identified students, this strategy helps build a district-wide culture focused on advanced learning and the development of student potential.

Collaboration across departments is central to UCPS's approach. The AIG Department partners with Exceptional Children (EC), Multilingual Learners (MLS), Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS), and Title I teams to review local and state assessment data. AIG representation within MTSS teams allows schools to:

- Provide professional development on common characteristics, identification practices and local norming.
- Use multiple data sources to strengthen identification processes and support alignment with district goals.
- Supporting students with a demonstrated need.

The district's commitment includes ongoing reflection and improvement. UCPS engages in regular analysis of demographic and performance data to evaluate the effectiveness of its screening, referral, and identification strategies. Procedures are revised as needed to address areas of access so that AIG programs remain responsive to the district's evolving needs.

In UCPS, access to advanced coursework is not just a goal but a continuous process. Through targeted strategies, data-driven practices, and intentional collaboration, the district is working towards providing opportunities for all students to realize their full potential.

#### Percent Ethnicity Identified as AIG

	Asian %	Black %	Hisp %	Native Amer %	Multi %	Pac Islander %	White %
<b>Female</b>	36.73%	5.43%	6.69%	---	15.79%	---	18.12%
<b>Male</b>	38.84%	<5%	7.81%	---	14.26%	---	20.18%
<b>Total</b>	37.80%	5.16%	7.26%	12.26%	15.01%	---	19.20%

#### Percent of Total AIG Students Identified as Dual Exceptionality

<5%

#### \* Practice D

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

The AIG Department employs a comprehensive and systematic approach to implement consistent screening, referral, and identification processes across all schools in the district. This multi-layered approach integrates compliance monitoring, professional development, centralized resources, and stakeholder engagement to uphold district standards and promote access to gifted services.

The **AIG Compliance Review Team** plays a central role in maintaining consistency. Each year, this team, composed of AIG Department staff, conducts detailed reviews of screening notebooks and archived student records for every school. By examining the documentation of all students who have been referred, screened, tested, or identified, the team adheres to district-wide guidelines and identifies discrepancies. In addition to supporting quality control, this process promotes transparency and builds trust among stakeholders. The compliance review also verifies the consistent application of identification procedures.

To further support consistency, the AIG Department provides extensive resources and training to AIG teachers and school staff. During the annual district-wide screening process, the department assists with data collection and entry into screening notebooks, establishing a process where each school's records are complete and accurate. A centralized electronic database is used to archive student records, serving as both a reference for schools and a monitoring tool for the district. One-on-one training sessions, group workshops, and ongoing professional development opportunities equip AIG teachers with the knowledge and

skills needed to implement processes reliably. For newly hired AIG teachers, tailored small-group sessions, site visits, and coaching sessions offer additional guidance.

The **AIG Summer Testing Center** provides an additional layer of support, particularly during the summer months. This center administers assessments for students referred for further testing and shares the results with families and schools. All testing data is archived in the AIG Database and included in the district's Master Screening Notebook. By standardizing the testing process, the center helps maintain consistency and reliability across schools.

To monitor implementation, the district employs several tools and systems. Twice annually, AIG teachers verify their school's AIG roster and cross-check it with the State's AIG Headcount Reports. This process confirms records are accurate and up-to-date. Similarly, every school maintains an AIG screening notebook, which documents all students considered for gifted services. These notebooks provide a comprehensive record of data points and decisions, serving as essential references for compliance reviews. To support AIG teachers, the district maintains an AIG Teacher Website, offering resources such as flowcharts, checklists, and step-by-step guides to streamline processes and procedural clarity.

Professional development is a cornerstone of the district's efforts to promote consistency. Annual training sessions cover every stage of the referral, screening, and identification processes, with additional opportunities provided throughout the year. AIG teacher meetings and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) create forums for collaboration, reflection, and skill-building. These sessions are tailored to address emerging needs, such as data trends and addressing concerns, helping district personnel remain responsive to challenges and committed to continuous improvement.

Engaging families and stakeholders is another key priority. The district communicates regularly with families through letters, brochures, and a dedicated AIG Department website, providing access to information about the gifted program. Resources such as the **Parent Handbook on Gifted Education** and the **AIG Summer Screening Brochure** provide clear explanations of processes, criteria, and available services. Bilingual materials and targeted outreach strengthen communication with families and supports the district's efforts to increase participation in advanced learning pathways.

Despite these robust systems, the district recognizes the need for ongoing improvement, such as analyzing data trends, partnering with schools to support talent development opportunities, and expanding pilot programs that support frontloading. Feedback loops from professional development sessions, compliance reviews, and family engagement efforts will inform adjustments to procedures and training topics.

The district's approach to monitoring screening, referral, and identification processes is both comprehensive and dynamic. By combining compliance reviews, centralized resources, professional development, and stakeholder engagement, the AIG Department supports consistent implementation across all schools while striving for continuous improvement and increasing access to programs.

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

The UCPS AIG Department has developed a comprehensive communication plan designed to support all stakeholders, including school personnel, parents/guardians, students, and the community-at-large, have access to clear, accurate, and consistent information regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes for gifted services. The plan prioritizes accessibility and collaboration by utilizing various communication channels, visual supports, and multilingual resources to meet the needs of our community.

To **reach school and district personnel**, the AIG Department conducts annual in-service training sessions that provide educators with an overview of the referral, screening, and identification processes, as well as strategies to identify and support gifted learners whose strengths may not be readily recognized. Bi-annual meetings with school administrators and AIG Teams reinforce these practices, supporting a consistent understanding of procedures across all schools. School-site AIG teachers serve as critical liaisons, sharing information with their colleagues and providing direct support for referrals and screening. Training webinars, accessible on the district's AIG Toolbox website, further equip staff with on-demand resources to stay informed throughout the school year.

**For parents and guardians**, the AIG Department offers multiple avenues to access information. Materials such as brochures, annual screening notices, and a detailed parent handbook are distributed during events like open houses and curriculum nights. These resources explain the processes in user-friendly language and include visual aids such as flowcharts and bulleted lists for clarity. Additionally, written materials are translated into Spanish and interpreters are available during parent meetings. Furthermore, parents can access FAQs, informational videos, and resources on the AIG Department website, which is continually updated. Plans are underway to develop a listserv that will provide families with timely updates, including enrichment opportunities, referral deadlines, and other relevant information.

**To engage students**, the AIG Department incorporates classroom-based presentations and discussions led by AIG teachers. These sessions are designed to inform students about the benefits of gifted services and how they can engage in the referral process. Visual tools, including simplified brochures and decision-making flowcharts, help students understand the steps involved. The addition of student voices, such as testimonials or examples of the impact of AIG services, further personalizes the message and encourages students to explore their potential.

**The community-at-large** is kept informed through public-facing materials and events. Flyers and brochures about gifted services are distributed at libraries, community centers, at the schools, and other public locations. The AIG Department website serves as a hub for general information, linking community members to updates on gifted education, upcoming events, and external enrichment opportunities. Partnerships with local organizations enhance outreach efforts by reaching a wider audience. In addition, webinars and community training sessions are hosted in-person and online to build awareness and understanding of AIG processes, including how students are identified and supported.

The AIG Department leverages multiple formats and tools to increase accessibility of information for all stakeholders. A standardized presentation, available as a PowerPoint or video, outlines the referral, screening, and identification processes and is tailored to various audiences. The department is exploring options for creating a lending library with physical and digital resources, and offering additional support to families and educators. Visual aids, such as graphic organizers and bulleted lists, are used throughout materials to simplify complex processes, and translation services support additional community participation.

By integrating ongoing communication into district-wide activities and events, such as kindergarten registration and new family orientations, the AIG Department continuously shares information about gifted services throughout the year. Through newsletters, professional development, and parent webinars, the district prompts transparent and accessible communication that contributes to a collaborative environment focused on the identification and support of gifted learners.

\* **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.

The district is committed to supporting a transparent and systematic process for AIG identification by thoroughly documenting all evidence gathered and analyzed for each student. This documentation is reviewed with parents/guardians at key decision points and is maintained securely in accordance with district policies and state guidelines.

## Documentation of Evidence

For every student referred for further evaluation or identified for gifted services, the district maintains an **AIG file** that includes all relevant evidence used in the identification process. These files are stored both electronically in the district's AIG database and as hard copies in secure AIG folders at the student's school. The evidence collected varies depending on the student's identification status and includes the following documentation:

- **Student Nomination Form (AIG 1)**: This form consolidates the student's data points, including existing records, test results, and other evidence considered during the identification process. The form also categorizes the student's data into pathway columns, clearly outlining the decision-making process. It is signed by the AIG Team and Director.

- **Permission to Test Form (AIG 2):** This document provides parents/guardians with a rationale for additional testing, explains the testing process, and secures their consent.
- **Invitation to Conference Letter (AIG 3):** Families receive this letter as a formal invitation to meet with the AIG Team to discuss placement decisions.
- **Notification of Placement Decisions (AIG 3B):** This letter informs families whether a student has qualified for gifted services or does not meet the criteria.
- **Testing Results Letter:** This letter is used in lieu of the AIG 3 & AIG 3B to inform families of the outcome from completing the screening process involving additional testing.
- **Differentiated Education Plans (AIG 4):** These plans outline the specific service options, content modifications, and enrichment opportunities provided to identified students. Parents/guardians review and sign these plans to consent to services.

Additional documentation, such as referral forms, withdrawal/exit forms (AIG 7), and other supporting evidence, is also included in the student's file when applicable. These records maintain a robust and transparent process for every student evaluated through the AIG program.

### **Process for Reviewing Documentation with Parents/Guardians**

The district places a strong emphasis on meaningful collaboration with families throughout the identification process. Once the initial evaluation is complete, parents/guardians are given the option to attend a meeting to review the data-based evidence that led to the identification decision. During this meeting, families receive copies of all documentation, including the Student Nomination Form (AIG 1), and other relevant forms. The AIG Team thoroughly explains how the data aligns with the district's identification criteria and answers any questions families may have. If parents/guardians do not opt for a meeting, all forms are sent home for review and collaboration between the families and the school-based AIG teacher and principal are encouraged.

Parents are required to sign the Differentiated Education Plan (AIG 4) to confirm their understanding of gifted services and indicate whether they accept or decline services offered to the student. For families unable to attend the scheduled meeting, alternative arrangements are made. This may include rescheduling the meeting, hosting virtual conferences, or sending key documents home.

The district also provides ongoing communication tools, including email, phone contact, and digital portals, to keep parents informed about their child's progress and to address any questions or concerns related to the identification process.

### **Procedures for Maintaining AIG Documentation**

The district has implemented a dual system of AIG documentation that is securely maintained and accessible when needed.

- **Electronic Records:** All forms and evidence are archived in the district's AIG database. This centralized system provides a secure and efficient method for maintaining records while providing compliance with state and district requirements.
- **Hard Copies:** Physical copies of all documentation are stored in each student's AIG folder at their school. These folders are organized, monitored, and maintained by AIG Teachers to keep records up to date.
- **Retention Guidelines:** The district follows specific policies for storing and retaining AIG records. Student files are retained for five years after graduation, withdrawal, or exit from the program, after which they are securely destroyed. For students who transfer within or leave the district, an AIG 7 form is completed, logged changes are recorded by the school's data manager in the state database, and the form is archived in the AIG Database. The student's AIG Folder is marked confidential and sent with cumulative records to the new school.

The district also collaborates with other programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL), Exceptional Children (EC), and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), to align documentation practices and support consistency across departments. This collaboration helps streamline processes for students receiving services from multiple programs by supporting the appropriate and secure sharing of relevant data.

### **Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

The district regularly reviews and refines its documentation practices to meet the needs of students, families, and stakeholders. By maintaining thorough records, promoting clear communication, and emphasizing procedural transparency, the district strives to provide a positive and well-supported experience for students and their families participating in gifted services.

**\* 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.

The district develops and documents student plans that articulate differentiated curriculum and instruction services to match the needs of identified K-12 AIG students. These plans are designed to support effective programming, provide a continuum of services, and support transitions between grade levels. Plans include Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) for students identified for gifted services in math, reading, or both subject areas. All plans are developed collaboratively, informed by data, and reviewed with parents/guardians.

## Development of Student Plans

The DEP is designed to meet the academic, self-management skill needs, and enrichment needs of each student by leveraging a range of data and input from multiple stakeholders.

**Data Used to Match Services to Student Needs:** The district uses multiple data points to determine appropriate services for AIG students, including aptitude indicators from cognitive ability test scores, achievement indicators from the End of Grade/Course (EOG/EOC) standardized assessments given at the end of the school year, and performance indicators such as grades. For students requiring individualization, additional data such as behavioral observations, language proficiency assessments, or twice-exceptional evaluations may also inform the development of the service plan.

**Personnel Involved:** The development of DEPs is a collaborative process. AIG teachers work closely with general education teachers, counselors, school administrators, and, when appropriate, English as a Second Language (ESL) personnel or Exceptional Children staff to align services with the unique needs of each student. For twice-exceptional students, the AIG teacher participates in IEP meetings to integrate services or support the creation of a plan.

**Parent/Guardian Involvement:** Parents/guardians are active partners in the development of student plans. Initial plans are created when a student is newly identified for gifted services or is adding another area of service. Data, recommended services, and student goals are discussed. Parents/guardians provide input on their child's needs and consent to services by signing the plan. Opportunities for further feedback are provided during annual reviews and, when requested, individual meetings.

## DEP Overview

**DEPs:** The DEP outlines the differentiated services provided to students, including learning environment modifications, content adjustments, self-management skill development, and enrichment opportunities. DEPs are reviewed annually to monitor progress, update goals, and confirm parent/guardian consent for services. Parents/guardians sign the DEP when students are initially identified and during transitions to new school levels (e.g., elementary to middle school and/or middle school to high school) or when a student needs a change in services..

## Annual Review Process

All student plans are reviewed annually.

At the start of each school year, parents/guardians have the option to participate in meetings to discuss their child's progress, review evidence of growth (e.g., portfolios, assessment data), and provide input on any adjustments to the plan. Teachers and AIG teachers share updates on the student's performance and explain any recommended changes to services.

AIG teachers document revisions to the DEP and share updated plans with parents/guardians for review and signature. Progress toward meeting plan goals is communicated throughout the school year, often in conjunction with report cards or parent-teacher conferences.

## Support for Transitions

The district emphasizes seamless transitions for AIG students across grade levels to provide a continuum of services.

**Elementary to Middle School:** AIG teachers and general education teachers collaborate to align services as students transition from enrichment programs to formal gifted services. Parent/guardian meetings during this transition review updated plans and address any specific needs of the student.

**Middle to High School:** High school DEPs integrate a four-year plan aligned with students' academic and career goals. Annual reviews support alignment with accelerated coursework or other advanced opportunities. AIG teachers, counselors, and general education teachers support students in selecting appropriate courses and monitoring their progress.

## Ongoing Improvements

UCPS is committed to refining AIG services to better meet the needs of all students. Current initiatives include expanding career and course selection counseling through guidance sessions and digital tools for middle and high school students. An additional initiative is to explore the piloting of K-3 enrichment services to create talent development plans for early learners.

## \* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard

- Strengthen and Refine Talent Development and Enrichment Opportunities for Advanced Students
- Revitalize and Develop Pilot Programs
- Explore Options for Conducting a Longitudinal Study of Long-Term Outcomes of Identified Students
- Explore Options for Improving Support for Local Norms Use at the School Level
- Support Increased Use of Pathway 3

## Planned Sources of Evidence

\* School Screening Notebooks & AIG Documentation

\* Talent Development Vision Team Documents

\* Pilot Program Documents

* Stakeholder Feedback Loops (surveys, conversations, meeting notes, etc.)
* Data Automatically Collected for Students

Type	Documents	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 1 Additional Resources	N/A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">UCPS AIG Identification Criteria (English)</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">UCPS AIG Identification Criteria (Spanish)</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Pathway 3 Consideration Form</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Early Entrance to Kindergarten Process &amp; Application</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Acceleration Options &amp; Procedures</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">AIG Screening &amp; Referral Form</a></li> </ul>

Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

## Union County Public Schools (900) 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.

In our school district, we believe that every gifted learner deserves a program that is as unique as their talents and abilities. Our commitment to delivering an AIG (Academically and Intellectually Gifted) program that addresses the academic and intellectual needs of students from the start of their academic career to the end is grounded in a framework of collaboration, personalization, and flexible service delivery. This comprehensive approach supports each student with access to the opportunities and resources that will allow them to excel.

### Services Across Grade Levels (K-12)

In the **elementary grades** (K-5), we begin by providing all students with a solid foundation in critical thinking and problem-solving. Advanced learners benefit from differentiated instruction in their general education classrooms, where teachers work to extend and enrich the standard curriculum. For gifted students who need additional challenges, we offer pull-out programs where they can dive deeper into subjects such as math and reading. Here, they may encounter accelerated content that matches their pace and intellectual curiosity, allowing them to thrive without feeling constrained by the traditional curriculum.

As students transition to **middle school** (6-8), the scope of services expands. At this level, we introduce a wider range of academic enrichment opportunities. Advanced students engage with complex texts, delve into interdisciplinary projects, and tackle higher-order problems that develop both their analytical and creative skills. General education teachers collaborate with AIG teachers to tailor lessons that push the boundaries of their students' learning. Each gifted learner also has a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP), which guides their educational path and helps teachers differentiate the content and methods used in the AIG classrooms to meet the specific needs of the student in reading and mathematics.

In high school (grades 9-12) advanced and gifted learners benefit from a wide array of opportunities, including Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, dual enrollment, early college programs, and independent research experience that support in-depth exploration of individual interests. For some, acceleration in specific subjects—whether through advanced math classes, literature courses, or STEM research programs—enables students to move at their own pace, while still being fully integrated into the academic community. Outside of the classroom, advanced and gifted students are encouraged to explore leadership opportunities, participate in academic competitions, and engage with mentors who can guide them in their future academic or career pursuits.

### Collaboration Across Personnel

The success of our AIG program is not solely reliant on the work of any one department. Rather, it is a collective effort that brings together a variety of school personnel, all of whom play an integral role in meeting the needs of gifted students.

Our AIG coordinators and AIG teachers work closely with general education classroom teachers to offer guidance on differentiation, helping to make the curriculum appropriately challenging for advanced and gifted learners. Whether it's suggesting new approaches to teaching a specific concept or co-teaching a lesson, AIG coordinators and AIG teachers are a key resource for teachers seeking to better understand how to support their advanced students. Additionally, school counselors provide invaluable support by addressing the self-management skill needs of gifted students. These students often face unique challenges such as perfectionism or feelings of isolation, and counselors help them build resilience and self-advocacy skills.

Collaboration extends beyond the core teaching team. Psychologists and special education staff are deeply involved when we have twice-exceptional students—those who are both gifted and have a learning disability. In these cases, the team works together to support both sets of needs, offering the appropriate accommodations, while also providing opportunities for intellectual growth. Similarly, for our multilingual learners, language specialists collaborate with AIG teachers to provide language support without limiting academic advancement.

## Matching Services to Students' Needs and Identification Areas

One of the most important aspects of our AIG program is aligning services with each student's identified strengths. Whether a student is identified as academically gifted in reading or math, intellectually gifted, or both, our services are tailored to their specific needs.

For academically gifted students, we provide opportunities to accelerate in specific content areas. These learners may take advanced courses in reading or math, allowing them to progress through these subjects more quickly than their peers. Intellectually gifted students, on the other hand, benefit from enrichment opportunities that challenge them to think critically and creatively across subjects. For students who are both academically and intellectually gifted, the program is more dynamic and individualized. They may receive acceleration in certain subjects while simultaneously engaging in enrichment activities designed to push them intellectually in other areas. By offering flexible pathways and varied learning experiences, we support each gifted student by offering a program that matches their capabilities and interests.

## Implementation Strategies

A key part of our approach to implementing this comprehensive program is a mindset shift: we have moved away from a "one-size-fits-all" model to one that recognizes the various needs among our gifted learners. Rather than trying to fit every student into the same mold, we provide a range of services that allow students to experience enrichment, extension, and acceleration based on their individual strengths.

We also focus on developing self-management skills—such as leadership, problem-solving, and creative thinking—that will serve our students throughout their lives. These skills are developed not only through academic challenges but through opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and real-world problem solving. Whether it's working on a group project, presenting research at a local conference, or engaging in community service, we support our gifted students in being prepared for future challenges beyond the classroom.

In order to deliver these services effectively, we prioritize collaboration. General education teachers, counselors, AIG coordinators, AIG teachers, and other support staff work together regularly to support gifted students. Teachers have access to students' Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs), which guide their instruction and support students.

Additionally, we recognize the importance of aligning our services with the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework. Within this system, we offer a variety of service delivery options that can be tailored to the needs of individual students. For example, students may receive specialized support during scheduled periods designated for **intervention or enrichment**, such as "I/E Time" or "FLEX Time," where they can work on advanced academic projects or receive additional support based on their needs.

Through the integration of comprehensive services, collaboration among personnel, and a clear focus on matching services to the specific needs of each student, we are able to create a nurturing, challenging environment for gifted learners at every grade level. This holistic approach supports all students—

whether they are identified as academically gifted, intellectually gifted, or both—have the opportunity to reach their full potential, both academically and personally.

By creating an environment of growth, flexibility, and collaboration, we prepare our gifted students not just for success in school, but for a lifetime of learning and achievement.

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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.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies are supported and developed through the use of self-management skills and the UCPS Portrait of a Graduate durable skills.

Self-management skills are approaches to learning that include:

**Organizational Skills (managing time & tasks effectively)**

- Planning
- Setting goals, identifying strategies and taking action
- Managing material
- Organizing files and complex information
- Managing time
- Selecting and using technology effectively & productively

**Affective Skills (managing state of mind)**

- Being mindful
- Demonstrating perseverance
- Regulating emotions
- Being self-motivated
- Showing resilience
- Thinking positively

**Reflective Skills (Re-)considering the process of learning; choosing and using self-management skills)**

- Developing new skills, techniques and strategies
- Identifying areas of growth and areas of improvement
- Being a flexible learner
- Trying and evaluating new self-management skill
- Considering implications of choices
- Using multiple techniques for reflection

The Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) durable skills are explicitly taught in classrooms K-12 alongside the standard course of study. These essential five skills are what students need in school and life to be successful:

- **Key Contributor** (*actively participates in the community and is civic-minded, independent, and financially literate. Meets the demands of future opportunities with resilience and generosity*)
- **Innovative Leader** (*Rallies others toward a common goal through creativity, integrity and determination. Works to connect with other people through empathy and partnership*)
- **Resilient Problem-Solver** (*Capitalizes on productive struggle, inquiry, discourse and social learning to think critically and solve relevant and meaningful problems. Lifelong learning is driven by the desire for continuous improvement*)
- **Skilled Collaborator** (*Works respectfully as a productive member of a team. Demonstrates flexibility and adaptability for success in a rapidly-changing world*)
- **Effective Communicator** (*Accomplished in the skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and the use of technology. Possesses confidence and works in an organized manner*)

The district has developed flexible resources for teachers to use with K-12 students to emphasize the development of the PoG key characteristics and core self-management skill competencies. Professional development initiatives have been launched to support pioneer teachers at all schools in utilizing these resources effectively.

The PoG initiative is supported through collaboration across the district and includes members of Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) team, AIG team, and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). These teams meet regularly to share observations, review academic and behavioral data, and provide feedback on student needs. The team approach supports school-based plans that are actionable and implemented within classrooms. For example, a teacher uses a scenario in math to encourage productive struggle, celebrating effort and learning from mistakes, reinforcing growth mindset principles. Teams reconvene regularly to assess the effectiveness of strategies and refine them based on student outcomes.

### **Key Supports by Grade Span:**

- **PK-2:** Focused on building self-awareness and social awareness, students learn foundational skills such as identifying emotions, understanding others' perspectives, and practicing collaboration through classroom activities and play-based learning. For example, students role-play scenarios to resolve conflicts and build empathy.
- **Grades 3-5:** Emphasis is placed on developing self-management and relationship skills. School counselors deliver guidance sessions twice a year in AIG classrooms, addressing topics like managing frustration and working effectively in teams. Teachers integrate skills development into academic lessons, such as using group projects to promote teamwork and communication.
- **Grades 6-8:** Middle school students focus on navigating peer relationships and building resilience through challenges. Teachers incorporate skill development into academic discussions and provide strategies for handling stress related to perfectionism. Counselors hold peer workshops on topics such as time management and navigating social media responsibly.
- **Grades 9-12:** High school students are guided toward responsible decision-making and leadership. Individualized counseling sessions focus on preparing students for post-secondary opportunities and managing academic and social pressures. Peer-led mentoring programs offer additional support, encouraging students to practice collaboration and problem-solving.

### **Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs):**

The self-management skill needs of gifted learners are intentionally integrated into DEPs. Personalized goals are developed in collaboration with the AIG team, counselors, and families. AIG teachers, counselors, and AIG coordinators have access to these plans and collaborate on their implementation.

### **Collaboration and Roles:**

- **AIG Coordinators & AIG Teachers:** Lead the development of DEPs, provide training on gifted-specific self-management skill needs, and coordinate services across grade spans.
- **Instructional Support Staff:** Support AIG staff with providing training about advanced learner needs and coordinate efforts to extend and enrich curriculum across the subject areas in each grade level.
- **School Counselors:** Facilitate guidance sessions, offer individual counseling, and lead workshops targeting self-management skills like resilience and managing stress.

- **Teachers:** Integrate self-management into academic content and provide feedback on student progress.
- **MTSS Teams:** Analyze academic and behavioral data to identify students needing additional self-management interventions and develop support plans.
- **Families:** Partner with the school to support self-management skill goals at home by accessing resources provided during meetings or through internal district platforms.
- **Community Agencies and Student Support Professionals:** Provide professional development to staff and deliver specialized services for students with more intensive needs.

### **Monitoring and Adjustment:**

Goals for desired outcomes are specified for each grade band (PK-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12) and aligned with the Portrait of a Graduate key characteristics at three levels: crawl (novice), walk (progressing), and run (expert). These goals spiral upward to reflect students' developmental stages and increasing complexity of skills. Progress is monitored through student reflections, surveys, and data collected during MTSS and PLC meetings.

The district Canvas page hosts all grade-specific goals and resources, making them accessible to teachers, counselors, and administrators. Teams meet quarterly to review progress, adjust interventions, and share successful practices.

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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.

The AIG program in Union County Public Schools (UCPS) is deeply integrated with district priorities to support access to high-quality education for gifted learners. AIG services reflect the district's commitment to innovation and academic excellence, which are embedded in district strategic goals.

### **Integration with District Priorities:**

UCPS integrates the AIG program with district initiatives such as curriculum development, college and career readiness, and student support. Through the Talent Unleashed Grant, the district has advanced initiatives to expand AIG services in alignment with efforts to close excellence gaps. Additionally, the AIG Department collaborates with other departments (e.g., MTSS, counseling, and curriculum) to support alignment with district goals, including providing opportunities for advanced learners.

### **Resource Allocation:**

UCPS allocates resources to support the implementation of the AIG program through a multi-tiered approach:

- **Staffing:** Each school is equipped with AIG personnel hired by principals to support services that are responsive to individual school needs.
- **Funding:** Resources such as staff development funds, technology tools, and curricular materials are distributed across the district to support the consistent implementation of AIG services.
- **Technology and Materials:** The district provides access to specialized instructional materials such as Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS), William and Mary units, and Singapore Math to address the cognitive and self management needs of AIG learners. District-wide technology initiatives, such as the 1:1 laptop program, are leveraged to enhance AIG instruction.

To support consistent availability of resources, the AIG Department collaborates with district leadership to identify and address gaps in service provision, helping schools obtain the tools needed to meet the needs of gifted students.

### **Policy and Practice Alignment:**

The AIG program is guided by board-approved policies designed to identify and serve gifted learners effectively. These policies acknowledge that AIG students

are found across all cultural, economic, and geographic contexts. In practice, this guiding belief supports efforts to recognize and support advanced potential in students with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences:

- **School Specific Goals:** AIG services are integrated into school specific goals and align with the district's strategic goals. Schools are encouraged to address the needs of AIG and advanced learners through targeted interventions, curriculum enhancements, and school improvement plans.
- **Collaboration with Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS):** AIG Coordinators and teachers participate in MTSS teams to advocate for gifted learners and advocate for appropriate support within the district's multi-tiered systems.
- **Professional Development:** Policies are operationalized through ongoing professional development for all stakeholders, emphasizing evidence-based practices for serving gifted students.

UCPS also promotes continuous improvement through the evaluation of AIG services. Feedback from stakeholders (e.g., families, teachers, and students) is collected annually to refine programs and address emerging needs. The district prioritizes collaborative partnerships across departments to support AIG services representation in curriculum development, policy discussions, and resource allocation processes.

\* **Practice D**

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

In our district, we believe that intentional, flexible grouping practices are key to supporting the academic growth and personal development of students with advanced learning needs. We use a combination of thoughtful planning, continuous data analysis, and collaboration among educators to create dynamic groups that evolve based on student progress and instructional goals.

At the beginning of each school year, grouping assignments are carefully designed using baseline data, such as standardized test scores, diagnostic assessments, and classroom performance. Teachers and instructional support staff work together to review student profiles, which include readiness levels, learning preferences, and interests. This collaborative process supports the placement of students in groups that reflect their strengths and needs.

As the school year progresses, flexible grouping practices are adjusted to reflect students' growth and changing needs in every classroom. Teachers regularly collect and analyze data from formative assessments, student work, and classroom observations. Groups are designed with clear instructional purposes in mind, ranging from skill reinforcement and collaborative problem-solving. Depending on the objective, groups may be homogeneous to focus on specific skills or heterogeneous to encourage peer learning. Interest-based groups are also used to promote engagement and creativity.

These flexible groups are not static. Instead, they are part of a dynamic instructional approach supported by collaboration among grade-level and subject-area teams, professional learning communities, and MTSS structures. Teachers meet regularly to discuss student data and align grouping practices with school and district goals. In some schools, master schedules include dedicated "FLEX Time" or "I/E Time," allowing for targeted intervention and enrichment activities beyond regular gifted services.

In practice, flexible grouping is used in various ways as an instructional strategy to meet the needs of AIG and advanced learners across classrooms. AIG students may be homogeneously grouped for accelerated instruction in specific content areas, such as math or reading, and flexibly grouped within the AIG classroom for instructional purposes. Talent development students may be included in the AIG classroom to provide exposure to advanced learning opportunities. For subject areas outside of AIG services, AIG students are placed in general education classrooms with their same-age peers and are grouped flexibly for activities such as small group reading, project-based learning, or skill-specific interventions. For advanced learners in math and reading, grouping often involves compacted curriculum or accelerated pacing to support continuous challenge and growth.

To support educators in implementing these practices, the AIG Department collaborates with other departments to offer professional development. These sessions focus on designing effective grouping strategies, analyzing data to inform instruction, and using differentiation to meet the learning needs of students. Through this training, educators gain the skills and knowledge needed to create intentional, flexible groups that promote achievement and engagement for all students.

By combining thoughtful planning, evidence-based practices, and collaboration, we maintain that flexible grouping remains an effective tool for meeting the needs of AIG students and other advanced learners. Our approach not only supports academic growth but also encourages the development of critical skills such as collaboration, leadership, and self-reflection, preparing students for success both inside and outside the classroom.

**\* 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.

The district is committed to informing all teachers, administrators, and support staff about the delivery of differentiated services and instruction for AIG students, the local AIG program and plan, and the legislation and regulations governing gifted education. This commitment will be carried out through a multi-faceted approach designed to equip stakeholders with the knowledge and tools necessary to support gifted and advanced learners effectively.

### Delivery of Differentiated Services and Instruction

The district provides targeted professional development and resources to support all stakeholders in understanding how to deliver differentiated services and instruction for AIG students. Training sessions will emphasize practical strategies, including tiered lessons, curriculum compacting, enrichment opportunities, and the use of Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) to guide instruction. Stakeholders learn how to tailor their approach to support the academic and self-management needs of gifted learners with a focus on providing high-quality instruction and opportunities for advanced learning.

### Local AIG Program and Plan

All stakeholders will be introduced to the Local AIG Plan and its key components, with content tailored to their specific roles. For example, school leaders will receive training on how to support the implementation of the AIG Plan at their schools, while teachers will focus on instructional frameworks and collaboration within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Additionally, parents will have access to resources that clearly outline the identification process, available services, and their rights and responsibilities. These efforts support stakeholders in developing a clearer understanding of their role in supporting AIG students.

### Legislation and Regulations

Information on NC AIG Program Standards, Article 9B, and related policies will be integrated into district professional development, administrative meetings, and staff training. This PD supports stakeholders' understanding of the legal framework surrounding gifted education and their responsibilities within it. Training will also address the importance of compliance and how these regulations shape service delivery and programming for AIG students.

### Stakeholder-Specific Training and Communication

The district will deliver information to each stakeholder group in a manner that supports their specific needs:

- **School Board Members and Central Services Administrators:** These groups will receive an overview of the full AIG Plan, emphasizing its alignment with district goals.
- **School Principals and Assistant Principals:** Leaders will participate in targeted training on monitoring DEP implementation, supporting AIG services, and supporting a culture of gifted education.
- **Teachers and Support Staff:** General education teachers, counselors, and support staff will be trained on best practices for gifted instruction, differentiation, collaboration, and supporting student skill development.

- **Parents:** Parents will receive resources through open houses, curriculum nights, and the district's AIG website to help them navigate the identification process and understand gifted services.

## Communication Platforms

The district employs a variety of platforms to support accessibility of information:

- **AIG Department Website:** A public-facing resource offering program updates, links to legislation, the local plan and supplements, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and recorded webinars.
- **Internal Websites for Educators and Administrators:** Dedicated websites provide AIG teachers and administrators with research-based strategies, archived training materials, and information on legislative requirements.
- **Print Materials and Confidential Records:** Families will receive materials, including the parent handbook and brochures detailing screening and service processes. These materials support transparency through clear processes for accessing AIG records.

## Embedding Information into District Practices

To strengthen implementation, the district will embed AIG-related content into existing structures, such as staff onboarding materials, professional learning communities (PLCs), and district/school handbooks. A consistent presentation template aligned with NC AIG Standards will be used to support clarity and uniformity across all communication efforts.

## Collaboration and Continuous Improvement

Collaboration is central to the district's approach. AIG personnel will have dedicated time to work with administrators and teachers to support differentiated instruction, share updates, and seek feedback on the implementation of the AIG Plan. Additionally, initiatives such as AIG Academy cohorts, parent advisory councils, and school-level AIG teams will provide ongoing opportunities for stakeholders to engage with and support the AIG program.

All stakeholders are informed, engaged, and equipped to support gifted learners through the successful implementation of the AIG Plan.

### \* Practice F

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

The district has developed a comprehensive communication plan that addresses key transition points, including grade-to-grade transitions within a school, school-to-school transitions, and transfers from outside the district. This plan emphasizes collaboration, data sharing, and targeted support for students' academic, intellectual, and self-management needs.

## Grade-Level Transitions Within a School

To facilitate smooth transitions between grade levels within the same school, the district employs a system of teacher observations and feedback meetings. Teachers from adjacent grade levels observe one another's classrooms to better understand the curriculum, instructional strategies, and differentiation practices being implemented. Following these observations, teachers engage in structured feedback sessions to discuss specific strategies for supporting AIG and advanced students, share individualized student data, and align expectations for the upcoming school year.

Additionally, AIG Coordinators work with instructional support staff and general education teachers to support the review of differentiated education plans (DEPs) to reflect students' progress and evolving needs. This process supports all instructional staff with a clearer understanding of how AIG students are being served and how their services should evolve with the current school setting.

## School-to-School Transitions

For transitions between schools, such as from elementary to middle school or middle to high school, the district has established a formalized process to support continuity of services. AIG teachers deliver student records, including DEPs, to the receiving school. This handoff process includes a comprehensive roster of AIG students, along with documentation of their academic strengths, intellectual capabilities, self-management needs, and current services. To support accurate placement and grouping, these records are reviewed in joint meetings involving AIG teachers, counselors, and administrators from both the sending and receiving schools.

The district also organizes transition meetings at key points, such as the end of fifth and eighth grades, where "receiving" teachers collaborate with "feeder" teachers to review program goals, student needs, and planned services. These meetings address the vertical alignment of curriculum and enable communication between educators to support the students' goals. Transition visits for students, including opportunities to meet with AIG teachers and counselors at the next school level, further support students during these critical periods.

## Transfers from Outside the District

To support students transferring from outside the district, the AIG department has developed a structured onboarding process. Upon enrollment, school-site AIG teams review incoming students' records to determine eligibility and appropriate services. This review includes assessing prior identification criteria, consulting with families, and collaborating with instructional staff for timely placement. When necessary, additional assessments are conducted to align incoming students' profiles with district standards.

To streamline this process, the district maintains detailed written guidelines on AIG identification and services, which are readily available to families and staff. A centralized system for confidentially documenting and sharing AIG student information supports new students' needs in being quickly understood and addressed. Families of incoming AIG students are also invited to meet with school counselors and AIG teachers to discuss their child's unique needs and services.

## Data Sharing and Documentation

The district utilizes a centralized digital platform to facilitate the confidential sharing of AIG student data. This system includes information on how students were identified, the services they currently receive, and recommendations for future services. By making this information accessible to instructional staff at the beginning of each school year, the district equips teachers to provide consistent and effective support.

Documentation within this system also includes details about students' self-management needs, particularly for twice-exceptional learners and students whose strengths may not be immediately recognized through traditional measures. Collaborative transition meetings with the Multilingual Learners (ML) and Exceptional Children (EC) departments further support these students by addressing their unique needs during transitions.

## Counselor Training and Additional Resources

Recognizing the critical role counselors play in supporting AIG students, the district has initiated specialized training programs to enhance their understanding of gifted learners' academic and self-management needs. Regular collaboration between AIG staff and school counselors includes discussion of common

questions, resource sharing, and the exchange of evidence-based strategies to support gifted learners whose strengths may be overlooked through conventional identification methods.

The district also offers an AIG Academy, a year-long blended course for administrators, counselors, and teachers. This program provides participants with advanced training in AIG services and equips them to better support gifted and advanced learners through differentiated instruction. Graduates of the program are recognized as having the expertise needed to effectively serve AIG and advanced students.

## Ongoing Curriculum Development and Alignment

To support the continuity of services, the district emphasizes ongoing curriculum development and resource alignment. AIG coordinators work with teachers to create and refine materials that meet the district's AIG curriculum framework. These efforts support consistency with instructional practices and support high-quality, differentiated instruction at every level.

### \* 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.

Acceleration is defined as “progress through an educational program at rates faster or at ages younger than conventional” (Pressy, 1949, p. 2). It is an effective strategy to meet the advanced learning needs of students. Acceleration should occur when students with high levels of readiness and motivation move through traditional curriculum at rates that are much faster than typical. The acceleration process determines the best options for students who need a more complex level of instruction to better match their needs. Please note, that these acceleration options are not a substitution for enrichment opportunities or differentiation strategies. Some students will be served best by enrichment, some by differentiation, some by acceleration, and some by the mix of the three (Neihart, 2007; Rogers, 2002; Schiever & Maker, 2003).

UCPS offers grade-based acceleration options such as:

- Early admission to Kindergarten
- Whole-grade acceleration
- Early entrance to college

Grade-based acceleration options typically shorten the number of years a student spends in the K-12 system. In practice, a student is placed on a full-time basis in a higher-grade level than is typical given the student’s age for the purpose of providing consistent access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

Grade-based acceleration is commonly known as “grade skipping,” but it can include other means to shorten the number of years a student remains in the K-12 school system. The exception is early entrance to Kindergarten, which does not shorten the number of years the student spends in the K-12 system, but shortens the wait time to start school.

UCPS offers content-based acceleration options such as:

- Single-subject acceleration
- Curriculum compacting
- Dual enrollment
- Credit by demonstrated mastery (CDM)
- Advanced Placement (AP) courses
- International Baccalaureate (IB) Pathways and Diploma Programme (DP)

Content-based acceleration includes a variety of strategies. These strategies provide students with advanced content, skills, or understandings before the expected age or grade level. Students typically remain with peers of the same age and grade for most of the school day but receive higher-grade-level instruction in an advanced grade or course. Content-based acceleration can also refer to allowing students to work on higher grade-level instruction in their general-education classrooms in lieu of grade-level instruction.

Each acceleration option is described in more detail below, starting with grade-based acceleration options followed by content-based acceleration options.

## GRADE-BASED ACCELERATION OPTIONS

### Early Admission to Kindergarten

The 1997 General Assembly passed legislation allowing a child who has reached his/her fourth birthday by April 16 to enter kindergarten if he or she demonstrates an extraordinary level of academic ability and maturity and is presented within the first thirty (30) calendar days of the school year. In determining eligibility, the principal shall convene a committee of educational professionals who will assist him/her in making decisions about each individual child.

Criteria that is considered includes the following:

- Aptitude Indicator (98th percentile)
- Achievement Indicator (98th percentile)
- Performance Indicator (Student work samples)
- Observable Student Behavior (2 Letters of Recommendation & Social Development Checklist)
- Parent & Child Interviews
- Principal Recommendation
- Parent Consent

#### Aptitude Indicator: 98th Percentile

A child eligible to enter school early shall be precocious in academic and social development and score at the 98th percentile on a standard individual test of intelligence such as the Stanford-Binet Fifth Edition, the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence Fifth Edition, the Kaufman Anderson, or any other comparable, nationally-normed test administered by a licensed psychologist outside of UCPS. The psychologist should send the completed battery of test results to the Principal of the school. The AIG department nor the principal will accept test results from parents/guardians.

#### Achievement Indicator: 98th Percentile

Children entering kindergarten early shall be functioning two to three years beyond their peers. Children eligible for early admission to kindergarten shall score at the 98th percentile on both reading and mathematics on a standard test of achievement such as the Metropolitan Readiness Test, the Stanford Early School Achievement Test, the Mini-Battery of Achievement, or the Woodcock-Johnson, administered by a licensed psychologist outside of UCPS. The psychologist should send the completed battery of test results to the Principal of the school. The AIG department nor the principal will accept test results from parents/guardians.

#### Performance Indicator: Student Work Samples

The child shall be able to perform tasks well above his or her same-age peers. The parents shall submit a sample of student work demonstrating outstanding ability in any of the following areas: art, math, writing, dramatic play, creative productions, science, social interactions, etc. A principal may ask a teacher to complete an informal reading assessment and/or observe the child's problem-solving skills, advanced vocabulary skills, writing fluency, or independent reading skills. The additional measures assist in the collection of more performance indicators and help to complete the picture of the child as a whole student.

#### Observable Student Behavior/Student Interest Indicators:

- Letters of Recommendations
- Social Development Checklist

The child shall demonstrate social and developmental maturity sufficient to be in a structured school setting for a full school day. The child should be capable of following verbal instructions and functioning independently within a group. In accordance with general assembly legislation passed in 1997, UCPS requires two letters of recommendation with specific documentation of physical and social maturity from preschool teachers, child care workers, pediatricians, or other adults with direct knowledge of the child. Documentation checklists that might be useful are the California Preschool Competency Scale, the Harrison Scale, or any other comparable scale of early social development.

#### **Motivation To Learn/Student Interest Indicator: Parent and Student Interviews**

The principal or his/her designee shall determine the students' motivation to learn and their interests through an informal interview with the child and a more structured interview with the parent/guardian. The interview process will help determine if the child displays a thirst for knowledge and seeks new and challenging learning situations.

#### **Early Admission to Kindergarten Process Outline:**

All testing of the child must be administered after April 16th that follows the child's fourth birthday. The psychologists should send the completed battery of test results to the principal of the school. The AIG department nor the principal will not accept test results from parents/guardians.

A parent/guardian wishing to submit his/her child for consideration for early admission to Kindergarten shall present the principal of his/her local school the required information within the first thirty (30) calendar days of the school year with the Application for Early Admission to Kindergarten found on the AIG Department Website. Within three (3) weeks of receiving the information, the principal shall decide as to whether or not the child is accepted.

If the child is admitted early to kindergarten and is not adjusting well to the school setting, the principal can rescind their approval of early admission based on substantial evidence documenting issues before the end of the first ninety (90) calendar days of the child's being enrolled. If the decision is made to remove the child from school, parents are notified in writing and given at least ten (10) days notice to arrange childcare, if needed.

Note: Early admission to kindergarten does not guarantee placement in the AIG Program.

#### **Whole Grade Acceleration for Grades K-8**

A student is a candidate for whole grade acceleration when they have demonstrated outstanding mastery of the content and curriculum for all subjects in their grade level. This option is also known as "grade skipping" and a student can be considered for this process at the beginning of the year or during the school year. Typically, this acceleration option is appropriate for highly gifted students.

A student must meet the three basic requirements of a total score of 60 points or higher with the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS), have a teacher/AIG Team letter of recommendation, a principal letter of recommendation and an agreement for placement.

In order to qualify, a student must meet all of the following criteria using components of the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) for both qualitative and quantitative factors and achieve a total score of 60 points or higher:

#### **Qualitative (descriptive) components:**

- School and Academic Factors
- Developmental Factors
- Interpersonal Skills
- Attitude and Support

## **Quantitative (numerical) components:**

- Full Scale IQ Test ( $>130$ )
- On Grade Level Achievement Test (95th percentile in reading, language arts, and math)
- Two Grade levels Above Achievement Test (75th percentile in reading, language arts, and math)

## **Whole-Grade Acceleration Process Outline:**

A student can be nominated by a parent or a classroom teacher. If a parent/guardian wants to nominate a student for whole grade acceleration, they must contact the AIG Teacher. If a classroom teacher is nominating a student, they will need to contact the parents/guardians and their principal.

The principal and the AIG teacher will speak with the classroom teacher to address parent/teacher concerns of curriculum rigor and make suggestions for differentiation using reading, math, science, and social studies differentiation.

The classroom teacher will notify the parents/guardians of the differentiation strategies being used with the student and the reasons for those strategies. The classroom teacher uses the support materials with the student for a minimum of six weeks. If the differentiation is fulfilling the academic needs of the student, then the acceleration evaluation process stops. If the differentiation is not fulfilling the academic needs of the student then the classroom teacher meets with the AIG Teacher to review the support materials along with any relevant data/information to aid in the decision-making process of either subject accelerating or whole grade accelerating. The AIG Teacher meets with the parents/guardians to discuss the acceleration screening process and options for acceleration using the acceleration guide.

The classroom teacher completes the review of qualitative components of the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) and returns the booklet to the AIG Teacher. The AIG Teacher calls a meeting with the AIG Team.

The AIG Team reviews the information completed in the IAS booklet to make further recommendations. If further assessment is recommended, an AIG 2 (permission to test) form is sent home for parent/guardian consent and signature.

Each level of testing is dependent on meeting the score criteria prior to taking the next assessment. The first test administered is an on-grade level achievement test, followed by two-grade levels above achievement test, and lastly, the administration of an IQ test by a licensed psychologist. If a student does not meet the score requirement for an assessment, the acceleration review process stops.

Once testing is completed and the student meets all the criteria, the AIG Team meets to review the data with the AIG Department using the IAS guidelines and acceleration matrix criteria.

The principal meets with the parents to discuss options. A final placement decision is made by the principal, provided that all criteria were met, and consideration was given to self-management needs of the student.

## **Services for Whole Grade Acceleration**

For students who meet the criteria and are approved for whole grade acceleration move to the next grade level. Academic needs are addressed within the general education classroom of the next grade level.

## **Early Graduation & Entrance to College for Grades 11-12**

Early entrance to college can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The first way is that a student graduates early from high school, usually in three-and-a-half years or less. Generally, this is accomplished by increasing the amount of high school coursework undertaken each year in middle school and in high school. This may also, be accomplished through dual enrollment, distance learning coursework, or extracurricular activities. The second way is in conjunction with other acceleration options such as credit by demonstrated mastery and/or dual enrollment.

## **CONTENT-BASED ACCELERATION OPTIONS**

### **Single-Subject Acceleration for Grades K-8**

Single-subject acceleration is also known as content-based acceleration, this practice allows students to be placed in classes with older peers for part of the day, using higher-level curriculum or study materials while remaining in the classroom, or deliberately taking an advanced class that is one grade level above same-aged peers in one or more content areas.

A student is a candidate for single-subject acceleration when they have demonstrated outstanding mastery of the content and curriculum for at least one subject in their current grade level. A student can be considered for this process at the beginning of the year. Typically, this acceleration option is appropriate for all AIG Students identified as Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI).

A student must meet the three basic requirements of a total score of 60 points or higher with the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS), have a teacher/AIG Team letter of recommendation, a principal letter of recommendation and agreement for placement.

In order to qualify, a student must meet all of the following criteria using components of the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) for both qualitative and quantitative factors and achieve a total score of 60 points or higher:

#### **Qualitative (descriptive) components:**

- School and Academic Factors
- Developmental Factors
- Interpersonal Skills
- Attitude and Support

#### **Quantitative (numerical) components:**

- Full Scale IQ Test ( $>125$ )
- On Grade Level Achievement Test (95th percentile in reading and language arts or math)
- Two Grade levels Above Achievement Test (75th percentile in reading and language arts or math)

#### **Single-Subject Acceleration Process Outline:**

A student can be nominated by a parent or a classroom teacher. If a parent/guardian wants to nominate a student for single-subject acceleration, they must contact the principal. If a classroom teacher nominates a student, they will need to contact the parents/guardians and the principal. The principal and the AIG Teacher will speak with the classroom teacher to address parent/teacher concerns of curriculum rigor and make suggestions for differentiation using the Reading Differentiation Evidence for General Classroom Teachers Form or the Math Differentiation Evidence for General Classroom Teachers Form.

The classroom teacher will notify the parents/guardians of the differentiation strategies being used with the student and the reasons for those strategies. The classroom teacher uses the support materials with the student for a minimum of six weeks. If the differentiation is fulfilling the academic needs of the student, then the acceleration evaluation process stops. If the differentiation is not fulfilling the academic needs of the student then the classroom teacher meets with the AIG Teacher to review the support materials along with any relevant data/information to aid in the decision-making process of either subject acceleration. The principal and the AIG Teacher meet with the parents/guardians to discuss the acceleration screening process and options for acceleration using the acceleration guide.

The classroom teacher completes the review of qualitative components of the Iowa Acceleration Scale (IAS) and returns the booklet to the AIG Teacher. The AIG Teacher calls a meeting with the AIG Team.

The AIG Team reviews the information completed in the IAS booklet to make further recommendations. If further assessment is recommended, an AIG 2 (permission to test) form is sent home for parent/guardian consent and signature.

Each level of testing is dependent on meeting the score criteria prior to taking the next assessment. The first test administered is an on-grade level achievement test, followed by two-grade levels above achievement test, and lastly, the administration of an IQ test by a licensed psychologist. If a student does not meet the score requirement for an assessment, the acceleration review process stops.

Once testing is completed and the student meets all the criteria, the AIG Team meets to review the data with the AIG Department using the IAS guidelines and acceleration matrix criteria.

The principal meets with the parents to discuss options. A final placement decision is made by the principal, provided that all criteria were met, and consideration was given to self-management needs of the student.

#### **Services for Single-Subject Acceleration**

For students who meet the criteria and are approved for single-subject acceleration move to the next grade level in one or more content area(s). Academic needs are addressed within the general education classroom of the next grade level for the area(s) of acceleration.

#### **Curriculum Compacting for Grades K-12**

Curriculum compacting is a technique for differentiating instruction that allows teachers to adjust curriculum for students who have already mastered the material to be learned through the use of pre-assessment. Teachers adjust curriculum for those students by replacing content students already know with new content, enrichment options, or other activities. It is recommended that teachers first determine the expected goals of the unit or lesson in terms of content, skills, or standards students must learn before assessing students to determine which ones have already mastered most of the specified learning outcomes.

#### **Automatic Enrollment in Advanced Courses in Mathematics**

In 2019, North Carolina passed SL 2019-120 (S.115C-81.36). It requires, when practicable, that students who score at the highest level on the mathematics end-of-grade tests are automatically enrolled in advanced learning opportunities in mathematics in grades 3-5, and advanced mathematics courses for grades 6 and higher for the following year. Advanced learning opportunities are those services and curricular modifications in mathematics as approved by the Local Education Agency (LEA). For students in grades 6-12, they are automatically enrolled in an advanced math course for the following year. Students who qualify for advanced math courses cannot be removed unless a parent/guardian provides written consent.

UCPS is exploring options for students who score at the highest levels in other subject areas.

#### **Dual Enrollment for Grades 6-12**

Dual or concurrent enrollment is when a student is enrolled in two separate, academically related institutions at the same time. UCPS allows advanced students to enroll in higher-level coursework when proficiency at grade level has been demonstrated. For example, the middle school student takes a high school math course, or the high school student takes a college or university course during the school day.

In middle school, UCPS offers Math I, Math II, and/or Math III and English I to middle school students. These advanced courses are appropriate for students who have demonstrated proficiency at grade level and need a higher-level course. These courses are for high school credit.

In high school, students can participate in Career and College Promise (CCP) to be dually enrolled at their high school and a state community college. UCPS has a partnership with South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) where most additional fees are also waived for CCP students. Students may also attend another community college but are responsible for any additional fees. Students can attend another college or university of their choice at their own expense. Students and families will need to contact the school counselor to get more information to apply to SPCC. Prior approval from the Principal is needed for courses not part of the Career and College Promise Program. Refer to the "Non-UCPS Courses" section of the Program of Studies for more information.

## **Credit By Demonstrated Mastery for Grades 6-12**

Credit by Demonstrated Mastery or CDM is available to all students in grades 6-12 in North Carolina under State Board Education Policy SBE-GCS-M-001, Section 13. Under this policy, students can accelerate their learning by applying for credit by demonstrating mastery (CDM). CDM provides an opportunity to earn high school course credit by demonstrating mastery in the course curriculum without requiring the student to complete classroom instruction for 135 hours of seat time. Through this process, students will complete two phases of assessment in order to demonstrate mastery.

Earning high school credits via CDM may provide more opportunities for students to complete courses through Advanced Placement (AP) or Career and College Promise (CCP) faster/earlier in high school. Middle school students may only attempt CDM for courses taught in the middle school including English I (8th grade only), Math I, Math II, Math III (8th Grade only).

Students and parents must complete an application in order to begin the CDM process which occurs in two separate phases:

### **Phase 1**

This phase includes an examination to establish student mastery of the foundational skills and content of the course/subject. Students will either take the End of Course Exam (EOC), CTE Exam, or locally developed course final exam for the subject they select. Students must earn a minimum score within the highest level on an EOC, a 90% on the NCFE, a 93% on a CTE exam, or a 94% on a locally developed exam to be eligible to continue to Phase 2. For World Language courses, students take an assessment on their reading and listening skills.

### **Phase 2**

This phase includes for non-World Language courses a student artifact that reflects deep understanding of the content standards, including the ability to apply the skills and knowledge expected at the end of the course. This may require a presentation, project, interview, portfolio, etc. The CDM committee will make a recommendation as to whether or not the student earns the credit. For World Language courses, students take an additional assessment on their writing and speaking skills.

If a student is successful in attaining CDM, the course is recorded on the transcript as a College Prep (CP) level course with a grade of "Pass." The course will count toward meeting graduation requirements, but no numerical grade or quality points will be granted. The grade point average (GPA) will not be affected.

If the student is not successful, neither the course nor the grade will be reflected on the transcript or other school records.

The application for CDM can be found on the school's district website under the Academics section of the UCPS website late in the second semester. See the school counselor for more information and to have any questions answered.

## **Advanced Placement (AP) Coursework for Grades 9-12**

The AP program offers college-level coursework for students in high school. All students can take AP coursework as long as the prerequisites have been met. The benefit of an AP course is that the qualifying scores on AP exams could allow students to earn university credit and/or advanced university standing based on the examination area. Interested students should speak to their counselor for more information about AP courses and check into the reciprocity of these courses at desired colleges or universities. See the high school counselor and/or the high school program of studies handbook for more information.

## **International Baccalaureate (IB) Pathways for Grades 9-10 & Diploma Programme (DP) for Grades 11-12**

Advanced students may participate in the IB program, taking the corresponding university-level curricula. Students complete multiple assessments during the course of the program, receiving advanced standing and course credits upon registration to university or college.

Currently, the IB programs are housed at Marvin Ridge High School and the Central Academy of Technology and the Arts (CATA). Students need to apply for an IB school.

Any UCPS student is eligible for the IB Pathway Program as long as they have:

- Passed all their 7th grade classes and the first semester of 8th grade
- Have an 80% average across all courses
- Have no long-term suspensions.

In order for students to enter the Diploma Programme (DP) as 11th graders, they must demonstrate that they are equipped to handle the rigor and demands of the DP. Students must not fail any course, maintain a minimum of 80% class average, and meet the behavior and discipline expectations during the IB Pathway Program. Students who are on a transfer who do not maintain the necessary GPA or who do not enroll in the DP program will return to their home high school. Students will be asked to return to their home high school at the end of 9th or 10th grade if they do not meet the requirements.

More information about these programs and the application process are on the College Readiness website.

- \* **Practice H**  
Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students with early intervention and talent development opportunities through purposeful and intentional programming.

The district is committed to intentionally addressing the academic, intellectual, and self-management needs of young learners with outstanding potential or advanced achievement. This will be accomplished through purposeful programming and collaboration among educators, guided by evidence-based practices and tailored to the unique developmental needs of K-3 students.

## Intentional Talent Development and Early Intervention

Each school will implement a comprehensive AIG Enrichment Services Plan designed to cultivate the potential of all students in grades K-3, focusing on those with readily observable strengths and those whose potential is not yet fully evident. To support this effort, the district will:

1. **Pilot the Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) Program:** Pilot schools will introduce PETS as an enrichment and talent development opportunity for K-3 students. This program emphasizes different thinking skills and incorporates whole-group instruction followed by small, flexible grouping for targeted enrichment based on observed student performance.
2. **Enrichment and Extension Opportunities:** Schools will offer differentiated whole-group and small-group enrichment activities aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS). These activities are designed to develop creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and leadership while addressing identified student needs.
3. **Flexible Grouping Practices:** Flexible grouping will be utilized to provide tailored opportunities for students demonstrating advanced academic abilities, critical thinking, or creative problem-solving skills. Teachers will consider demonstrated performance, behavioral traits, and student interests in determining group membership.
4. **Portfolio Development:** Students consistently participating in small flexible groups will develop portfolios showcasing their work. These portfolios will document growth and provide evidence for alternative assessment and potential identification for formal AIG services by fourth grade.

## Collaborative Efforts to Identify and Support Students

Recognizing the importance of collaboration, the district will promote partnerships among general education educators, AIG teachers, special educators, and other instructional staff to recognize and respond to outstanding potential in young students. These partnerships will include:

- Instructional Support Staff & AIG Teacher as Resources:** Instructional support staff and AIG teachers will serve as collaborators and consultants, working alongside general education teachers to design and implement enrichment opportunities. They will also provide professional development on identifying and supporting advanced learners.
- Professional Learning Opportunities:** District-based professional development is offered to all educators and staff members during our Professional Learning Days. Additional resources such as webinars will guide schools in recognizing outstanding potential and designing intentional programming.
- Use of Observation Tools:** Tools such as the Gifted Characteristics Observation Form and Rating Scales will be used to identify students for talent development opportunities. Data from these observations will be used to make informed decisions about enrichment and extension activities.

## Purposeful Programming for All Learners

The district aims to create intentional learning environments where teachers can observe and nurture a variety of strengths. Programming will include:

- Differentiated curriculum and instruction to address opportunity gaps and cultivate students' strengths.
- Opportunities to engage with advanced content and activities designed to spark curiosity and strengthen critical thinking skills.
- Talent development practices designed to recognize and develop leadership, communication, and collaboration skills.

This comprehensive and intentional approach provides access to talent development opportunities for all K-3 students, with a particular focus on those who demonstrate potential for high achievement or outstanding abilities.

### \* 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.

The AIG Department remains focused on advancing excellence by increasing opportunities for students in grades 4-12 to engage in advanced learning experiences. Efforts include comprehensive screening processes, targeted talent development practices, and promoting a collaborative mindset among educators, families, and stakeholders to support students from all backgrounds in engaging with rigorous learning experiences.

## Efforts to Broaden Access Across Grades 4-12

The district utilizes a universal screening process to identify students with advanced learning potential, assessing all 3rd through 7th-grade students annually. This includes analyzing multiple data points, such as aptitude test results (using the highest scores between national and local norms), academic performance, teacher observations, and portfolios. These efforts allow for the identification of students who may not traditionally qualify for gifted services, particularly those whose strengths are not easily recognized through conventional methods.

In addition, the district has implemented alternative assessment measures, such as nonverbal aptitude tests and rating scales, to support the consideration of students from a variety of backgrounds for advanced learning opportunities..

To support ongoing talent development, flexible grouping strategies are employed, providing enrichment opportunities for all students, regardless of formal identification. These groups are dynamic, adjusting to students' evolving strengths and needs as identified through formative assessments and classroom observations.

## Efforts to Address Mindsets

The district prioritizes cultivating educator mindsets that support the recognition and development of advanced learning potential across a wide range of student experiences. Professional development focuses on responsive teaching and identifying giftedness using multiple indicators. By promoting collaboration among general education, AIG, English as a Second Language (ESL), Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS), and Exceptional Children (EC) teachers, the district creates a shared understanding of strategies to meet the academic and instructional needs of all learners.

Family engagement plays a vital role, with targeted outreach designed to inform and support families in navigating advanced learning pathways, particularly in communities where such opportunities have not been widely utilized in the past.

## Policy Framework Supporting Gifted Education

District policies support universal screening and the use of national, grade level, and local norms to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of the identification processes. Policies also emphasize the flexibility in advanced course enrollment, allowing students to participate in higher-level instruction without formal AIG identification--providing opportunities to demonstrate potential in a supportive setting. Additionally, the district supports teachers across all schools by offering resources and training tailored to their instructional context and student learning needs.

## Talent Development Opportunities

The district offers a variety of talent development programs to cultivate strengths and talents across the 4-12 continuum:

- **Enrichment Activities:** Advanced math groups, enrichment clubs, and curriculum compacting provide students with opportunities to extend their learning.
- **Interest-Based Exploration:** Mentorships, job shadowing, and peer counseling allow students to explore their interests while developing critical skills.
- **Twice-Exceptional Support:** Collaboration between AIG and EC departments supports individualized plans that address the dual needs of twice-exceptional students.

## Use of Data to Inform Practices

The district employs a robust data collection and analysis process to guide intentional talent development practices. Annual screenings, formative assessments, and student work portfolios provide insights into students' strengths, and help inform support for all learners.

Disaggregated data is used to identify trends, enabling targeted interventions and services for students. These insights inform professional development, policy adjustments, and service design to better meet students' needs.

## Impact of Data on Stakeholder Mindsets

Regularly presenting data to educators, families, and administrators highlights both successes and areas for improvement, reinforcing a shared commitment to continuous growth and high expectations. By emphasizing the potential of students who may not be identified for gifted services, data helps reframe stakeholder perceptions of giftedness and encourages actions that broaden participation in advanced learning opportunities.

#### **\* Practice J**

Enhances and further develops the talents and interests of AIG students through extra-curricular programming during and outside of the school day.

The district offers a variety of extracurricular opportunities designed to meet the academic, intellectual, and self-management needs of AIG students across all grade spans (K-12). These programs aim to enhance and further develop students' talents and interests through engaging, challenging, and innovative activities. Extracurricular activities vary by school and are based on community wants and support.

#### **Elementary School (Grades K-5):**

At the elementary level, students can participate in programs such as Lego Clubs, Coding Clubs, Chess Club, and Battle of the Books. These programs stimulate intellectual curiosity, build problem-solving skills, and encourage collaboration. Opportunities like service learning projects and community-driven initiatives are also offered to support the development of leadership and empathy.

#### **Middle School (Grades 6-8):**

Middle school students have access to clubs and competitions that deepen academic and intellectual engagement, such as Math Clubs, Beta Club, Battle of the Books, and Future Problem Solvers (FPS). Programs like Odyssey of the Mind and Destination Imagination help identify and cultivate specific areas of talent while encouraging creativity and critical thinking. Self-Management needs are addressed through team-building activities and mentorship opportunities.

#### **High School (Grades 9-12):**

High school AIG students are provided with opportunities to participate in advanced extracurricular programs such as Science Olympiad, academic decathlons, and specialized interest groups aligned with career aspirations. Partnerships with local businesses and universities expand offerings, such as internships, research opportunities, and career exploration workshops. Clubs like Model UN, debate teams, and volunteer projects allow students to explore leadership roles and build real-world skills.

#### **Year-Round Support:**

The district maintains a dedicated AIG website, which includes recommendations for summer enrichment activities tailored to gifted learners. These activities provide additional outlets for career exploration, creative expression, and the pursuit of special interests.

#### **Enhancing Talents and Interests:**

These extracurricular programs support both academic excellence and personal growth. They help students explore and develop their talents, deepen their intellectual interests, and build essential skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and self-reflection. Self-Management needs are supported by creating environments where students can connect with peers who share similar interests and abilities.

#### **\* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

- Increased Collaboration Between AIG Personnel and Stakeholders
- Improve Consistency of Plan Implementation
- Intentional Professional Development For All Educators About Gifted and Advanced Learners
- Improve Instructional Support for Teachers to Develop Capacity and Confidence in Serving Advanced and Gifted Learners
- Revitalize Pilot Program for College & Career Counseling
- Explore Options for Conducting an Acceleration Outcome Study

#### **Planned Sources of Evidence**

- \* Meeting Agendas, Notes & Feedback Forms

* Pilot Program Documents
* Walkthrough Tools/Checklists, Administrator self-assessments/reflections, Focus Groups
* Automatically Collected Student Data

Type	Documents	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 2 Additional Resources	N/A		 <a href="#"><u>Advanced Learners, TD &amp; Gifted Services Plan</u></a>

**Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction**

**Union County Public Schools (900) 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.

UCPS has a set of learning outcomes to address the range of advanced ability levels in language arts and mathematics by clearly defining expectations of students served within gifted services. These expectations and learning outcomes are addressed with the Gifted Services Outcomes & Curriculum Framework document, which delineates learning outcomes for students that extend beyond the standards of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (SCOS). These outcomes are designed collaboratively by stakeholders, including AIG Coordinators, AIG teachers, general education teachers, and district curriculum leaders, using a combination of assessment data, research on best practices, and feedback from educators and families. The document can be found on the AIG Department Website.

**Differentiated Curriculum Development**

The development of differentiated curriculum is grounded in several foundational principles:

- The North Carolina Standard Course Of Study (NCSCOS) serves as the entry point for designing enriched, extended, and accelerated learning experiences for all students.
- Stakeholder collaboration supports alignment of the curriculum and instructional strategies to meet the needs of advanced learners.
- Evidence-based practices, including the Integrated Curriculum Model (ICM), provide a research-supported framework for differentiation.

UCPS starts with enrichment and extension of the general education curriculum in grades K-3 to nurture student strengths. Starting in grade 4, UCPS utilizes a value-added replacement curriculum for reading and mathematics for gifted students, which transitions into content area acceleration as students progress from grades 4-12. By emphasizing interdisciplinary connections and durable skills, the curriculum offers students rigorous and relevant learning experiences. Additionally, the district promotes the use of interdisciplinary units and project-based learning to engage students in rigorous, standards-based enrichment activities.

UCPS has developed a process to further accelerate AIG students where a 7th grade student could take Math 1 if they meet the district requirements of passing the Math 1 Readiness Test which is automatically administered to all 6th grade AIG math students. UCPS is exploring options for offering advanced options for reading courses.

**Differentiation by Instructional Staff**

UCPS instructional staff, including general education classroom teachers, AIG coordinators, and AIG teachers differentiate curriculum through enrichment, extension, curriculum compacting, and independent study in the following ways:

1. **Enrichment:** Teachers design lessons that explore concepts in greater depth, incorporate higher-level thinking skills, and allow for open-ended inquiry. For example, students might engage in Socratic seminars or research projects that require them to analyze complex issues and present evidence-based solutions.
2. **Extension:** Instruction focuses on applying learning to new and challenging contexts. In mathematics, students might create original models to solve real-world problems, while in English Language Arts (ELA), they might synthesize ideas across various literary genres.
3. **Curriculum Compacting:** A technique for differentiating instruction that allows the teacher to make adjustments to curriculum for students with demonstrated mastery of the targeted standards. Students engage in activities to deepen understanding of concepts through enrichment, extension, or independent study.
4. **Independent Study:** Students demonstrating readiness are provided opportunities for independent study based on student interest and content mastery.

To support differentiation, UCPS provides:

- **Collaboration and Planning Time:** AIG staff, instructional support staff and general education classroom teachers are provided with common planning time to co-design units and share differentiation strategies.
- **Coaching and Professional Development:** Teachers receive coaching and professional learning focused on enriching, extending, and compacting the North Carolina Standard Course Of Study (NCSocos). These sessions emphasize practical strategies for scaffolding instruction and designing assessments that align with differentiated learning outcomes.
- **Technology Integration:** Personalized learning environments are created using digital tools to support accelerated pacing, adaptive instruction, and individualized learning pathways for advanced students.

## District Support for Differentiation Across Grade Levels and Content Areas

UCPS provides comprehensive district-wide support for differentiation to meet the needs of advanced and gifted learners across all grade levels and content areas:

1. **District Expectations:** UCPS has developed clear guidelines and expectations for differentiation that include enriching, extending, and accelerating the NCSocos. These expectations are communicated through curriculum frameworks and professional development.
2. **Professional Learning Communities (PLC):** UCPS uses PLCs as a way to increase collaboration between and support for teachers. Educators meet regularly to: share expertise, work collaboratively, improve teaching skills, and enhance student's academic performance. PLCs are student-focused, action-oriented, and always geared toward continuous improvement. These meetings are used to facilitate a process for problem solving to meet student learning needs.
3. **Support Across Content Areas:** While much of the focus is on ELA and mathematics, the district also provides resources and professional development for differentiating instruction in science, social studies, and the arts. For example, interdisciplinary units might combine science with problem-based learning in social studies, allowing students to explore global issues through multiple perspectives.
4. **Increased Access to Advanced Learning Opportunities:** UCPS is committed to supporting differentiation and acceleration practices. AIG coordinators and instructional support staff collaborate with general education teachers to develop extension and enrichment opportunities for all students who demonstrate readiness for a more challenging curriculum, not just those formally identified as gifted.
5. **Collaboration Between Departments:** The AIG and General Education Departments work together to embed differentiation strategies into general education curriculum guides, supporting consistent implementation across schools.
6. **Future-Ready Skills Development:** Differentiation efforts are aligned with the district's EmpowerED Framework and Portrait of a UCPS Graduate initiatives, which emphasize the development of critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication, and leadership skills.

### Examples of Differentiation Across Grade Levels

- **Elementary (K-5):** Teachers use flexible grouping and scaffolded tasks to introduce enrichment opportunities such as exploring STEM challenges of conducting research projects on topics of interest. The focus is on developing foundational critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

- **Middle School (6-8):** Interdisciplinary units engage students in standards-based enrichment activities. For example, students might analyze historical events using primary sources in social studies while applying mathematical reasoning to historical data.
- **High School (9-12):** Advanced learners have access to dual enrollment; Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework; and independent study opportunities. Emphasis is placed on developing learner autonomy through self-directed projects and capstone experiences.

## Learning Outcomes for ELA and Mathematics

UCPS has developed specific learning outcomes for ELA and mathematics that address advanced conceptual understanding, strategic competence, and future-ready skills. These outcomes emphasize:

- **ELA:** Advancing literary analysis, persuasive expertise, communication capacity, linguistic competency, and learner autonomy.
- **Mathematics:** Enhancing conceptual understanding, problem-solving, adaptive reasoning, and interdisciplinary connections.

These outcomes are measured through a variety of assessments, including pre- and post-assessments, product evaluations, and self-regulative practices. Teachers use these assessments to tailor instruction and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery in innovative ways.

## Assessment and Continuous Improvement

UCPS supports differentiation through ongoing assessment and curriculum refinement.

Assessment options include:

1. Pre- and post-assessments to compact and accelerate learning.
2. Collaborative assessment design to support independent, inquiry-based investigations.
3. Self-reflective assessments to promote metacognitive awareness and learner autonomy.

Curriculum materials are regularly reviewed and updated to align with the NCSCOS and current research on high-ability and advanced learners. The district also conducts site visits to schools as well as visits other districts to explore best practices with curriculum, rigor, and engagement.

UCPS delivers enrichment, extension, and acceleration for advanced and gifted learners through differentiated curriculum, supported by collaboration among AIG Coordinators, AIG teachers, instructional support staff, general education teachers, and district leadership. These differentiation practices are also used with the delivery of the replacement curriculum for gifted students. By aligning these efforts with the EmpowerED Framework and the Portrait of a UCPS Graduate Initiative, the district prepares students to become innovative leaders, resilient problem-solvers, and effective collaborators equipped with the skills needed for future success.

### \* Practice B

Uses students' identified abilities, readiness, and interests to address a range of learning needs K-12.

All UCPS teachers use various data points, including assessment results, interest inventories, and learning profiles, to create differentiated lesson plans that address individual student needs. For example, pre-assessments are used to identify areas of mastery, allowing teachers to compact curriculum and design independent projects based on student interests. Additionally, readiness levels and areas of identification guide the selection of strategies such as tiered assignments, problem-based learning, and thematic units to provide depth, complexity, and increased rigor in alignment with students' abilities and readiness.

These strategies are implemented through evidence-based practices designed to address a range of learning needs. Pre-assessments inform grouping for differentiated activities, while enrichment opportunities, such as independent investigations and creative thinking tasks, develop student autonomy. Curriculum compacting supports advanced learners' progress at a suitable pace while freeing time for extension activities. Technology-based instruction and Socratic seminars encourage engagement through interactive and critical thinking approaches. Thematic units and shared inquiry integrate student interests to deepen learning connections.

AIG teachers and instructional staff provide consultative services for general education classroom teachers, offering support and collaboration in employing these strategies. Through school-based teaming structures, such as grade-level and subject-area teams and professional learning communities (PLCs), AIG coordinators, AIG teachers, and instructional support staff assist in identifying differentiation opportunities for both identified AIG students and high-potential learners who may not meet formal identification criteria.

To address a broader range of learning needs across K-12, UCPS is exploring initiatives that expand the application of differentiation strategies. Furthermore, professional development opportunities for instructional support staff and general education teachers are being developed to share best practices in differentiation, developing a culture of rigor, and increasing support throughout the district.

Efforts to provide enrichment activities and advanced learning opportunities extend beyond identified AIG students, targeting students demonstrating high potential or unique strengths. This approach aligns with the district's commitment to excellence for all learners.

#### \* Practice C

Incorporates a variety of evidence-based resources that address the range of academic, intellectual, and social and emotional needs of AIG students.

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) utilizes a variety of evidence-based resources and instructional practices to address the academic, intellectual, and self-management needs of AIG students. These resources are implemented intentionally to support students' holistic growth and development.

#### Academic and Intellectual Resources

To address the academic and intellectual needs of AIG students, UCPS employs an evidence-based replacement curricula and instructional tools specifically designed to meet the needs of advanced learners:

- **Depth and Complexity Framework:** UCPS teachers use this model to enhance curriculum through higher-order thinking, helping students explore content more deeply.
- **William and Mary Units:** Advanced curriculum units in language arts that challenge students with inquiry-based learning and critical thinking.
- **Great Books:** Texts used to develop critical and reflective thinking of readers through the shared inquiry process.
- **Singapore Mathematics Units:** Evidence-based math curricula designed to promote problem-solving and conceptual understanding in advanced mathematics.
- **Jacob's Ladder Reading Comprehension Program:** A research-based resource to scaffold advanced reading comprehension through analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- **Compact Curriculum and Tiered Assignments:** Instruction is differentiated to allow AIG students to accelerate through content, reducing redundancy and allowing for enrichment opportunities.

These resources are implemented through:

- **Enrichment/Extension Blocks:** AIG students work with small groups of non-AIG students to deliver advanced instruction during school-wide intervention/enrichment periods.
- **Pull-Out Programs:** AIG students participate in targeted pull-out instruction and are grouped with intellectual peers for advanced learning opportunities within the AIG education classroom.
- **Cluster Groups:** Advanced learners are grouped with intellectual peers for advanced learning opportunities within the general education classrooms.

- **Curriculum Guides and Maps:** UCPS provides teachers with instructional guides and curriculum maps to support the integration of evidence-based resources into daily instruction. These materials are accessible via a centralized digital repository for ease of use.
- **Professional Development:** UCPS personnel participate in training to identify and utilize evidence-based curricula effectively, supporting consistent implementation across all schools.

## Self-Management Skill Resources

To address the self-management skill needs of AIG students, UCPS employs a variety of evidence-based strategies:

- **Biotherapy:** AIG teachers incorporate literature and media that reflect the experiences of gifted learners, developing self-understanding and coping skills.
- **Habits of Mind (Art Costa):** AIG teachers help students build essential habits such as persistence, metacognition, and managing impulsivity to support their self-management skill growth.
- **Executive Functioning and Self-Regulation Skill Development:** Resources are used to help students manage time, plan, and adapt to challenges effectively.
- **Guidance Services:** Counselors collaborate with AIG teachers to address common challenges such as perfectionism, peer relationships, underachievement, and giftedness within different contexts.

Implementation strategies include:

- **Portrait of a Graduate Durable Skills:** Strategies are embedded into instructional practices to develop students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making as a key contributor, innovative leader, resilient problem-solver, skilled collaborator, and an effective communicator.
- **Career Planning:** An educational strategy with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) department. It proves students with career awareness, exploration and preparation with real-life work experiences allowing students to apply academic and technical skills. This process includes self-assessment, interest driven research, goal setting, planning, and reviewing skills.
- **Guidance Class Sessions:** Starting in elementary school, counselors deliver sessions tailored to students' affective needs based on student and teacher input. Topics include self-esteem, perfectionism, peer interaction, and giftedness in poverty.
- **Targeted Units of Study** such as "**Freshman Academy**": A high school program supporting the transition to advanced coursework, focusing on readiness skills, executive functioning, and relationship-building; and "**What It Means to Be Gifted**": A unit designed for newly identified gifted students to understand their strengths and challenges.
- **Biotherapy Units:** Lessons using literature and media to help gifted students explore identity, relationships, and resilience.
- **Collaboration with Student Services:** AIG coordinators and instructional support staff work closely with MTSS teams to analyze self-management data, such as behavior screening results, attendance, and discipline referrals. This collaboration supports early intervention.
- **Collaboration with Media Specialists:** AIG coordinators and instructional support staff work collaboratively with the school's media specialist to support student learning needs, and provide opportunities for academic competitions such as Battle of the Books.
- **Extracurricular Opportunities:** Schools offer a variety of extracurricular opportunities that can extend and enrich student learning, enhance self-management skills, and provide opportunities for students to meet others with similar interests.

## Resource Accessibility

Resources are readily available to teachers through:

- A digital resource repository containing evidence-based instructional materials, curriculum guides, bibliotherapy lesson plans, and professional learning resources.
- A resource library for UCPS teachers to access materials for targeted enrichment, extension and self-management support.

## Professional Development and Ongoing Support

UCPS prioritizes professional learning for AIG coordinators and teachers, instructional support staff, student support staff, general education teachers, and counselors to support the effective implementation of both academic and self-management resources. Professional development focuses on differentiation

strategies, rigor, productive struggle, resource integration, durable and self-management skill development to meet the holistic needs of AIG students and advanced learners.

UCPS remains committed to exploring additional options for supporting the affective and academic growth of gifted and advanced learners. This includes the development of new instructional units, enhanced professional development opportunities, and expanded guidance services to better serve students, including twice-exceptional and multilingual gifted learners.

#### \* 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.

Union County Public Schools remains dedicated to cultivating durable skills and mindset that equip students for success in post-secondary pathways and lifelong learning. These skills—adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, empathy, a learner's mindset, and personal responsibility—are intentionally embedded in our Portrait of a Graduate, programming, and instructional practices to create meaningful, real-world learning experiences.

One way we build these durable skills is through our district's use of the *Professional Learning Communities (PLC)* framework and a problem-solving cycle. Teachers regularly meet in grade-level and content-area teams to plan instruction, discuss student progress, and share ideas for incorporating skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication into their classrooms. This focus on access and activation encourages teachers to design opportunities for all students, including our gifted learners, to engage deeply with the curriculum while developing skills that will serve them well into adulthood.

AIG teachers are further supported through specialized professional learning sessions held throughout the year. These meetings provide space to reflect on the rigor and relevancy of instruction, differentiation strategies, and the unique needs of gifted learners. During these sessions, teachers collaborate to share best practices for promoting *critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication skills, reflection, problem-solving, and problem finding*. For example, the use of strategies for engaging students like Socratic seminars or Shared Inquiry seminars, where learners explore complex questions, listen actively to their peers, and refine their own ideas in a collaborative setting.

In the classroom, these efforts translate into dynamic, real-world learning opportunities that challenge AIG students to think critically, creatively, and flexibly. Whether they're participating in *problem-based learning projects*, leading discussions in *shared inquiry groups*, or debating solutions to current global issues, students are continuously encouraged to stretch their thinking and consider multiple perspectives. Extracurricular Programs like *Odyssey of the Mind, Coding, Robotics*, and *Model UN* provide even more opportunities for students to develop adaptability, collaboration, and creative problem-solving skills.

Equally important is our focus on building empathy and personal responsibility. AIG students engage with a wide range of literature and real-world scenarios that help them connect with experiences beyond their own. Through service-learning initiatives, they have the chance to make meaningful contributions to their communities while building leadership and organizational skills. Partnering with local businesses and organizations has also opened doors for mentorships, job shadowing, and internships, giving students a glimpse of the skills and mindsets required for success in professional settings.

We also believe in developing a learner's mindset—an outlook that encourages growth, curiosity, and perseverance. In our AIG classrooms, students tackle challenging research projects, take ownership of their learning, and develop the confidence to embrace new ideas. School-Based Clubs like *Speech and Debate, Science Olympiad, and Ethics Bowl* further nurture these skills, allowing students to explore their passions, engage in meaningful dialogue, and push themselves to achieve at higher levels. Furthermore, durable skill sets are developed with all students in all classrooms at UCPS through the Portrait of a Graduate (PoG) initiative and pioneer teacher programs.

At UCPS, we see these experiences as foundational for preparing students for the future. By giving them opportunities to apply durable skills in real-world contexts—whether through technology-driven collaborations, global partnerships, or community-based projects—we support our students and when they leave our schools, they are ready to adapt, innovate, and lead. These skills not only prepare them for success in college and careers but also empower them to make meaningful contributions to their communities and the world.

**\* Practice E**  
Uses ongoing assessment, both formative and summative, to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction.

UCPS uses a variety of assessments, both formative and summative, to inform instructional decisions and differentiate curriculum and instruction for gifted and advanced learners. These assessments include, but are not limited to, local benchmark tests, reading records, pre-assessments, classroom-based formative checks, universal screeners, and summative evaluations. Pre-assessments specifically allow educators to determine which content can be compacted, accelerated, or enriched based on students' existing knowledge and skills.

Assessment data informs differentiation strategies by supporting instruction matches student readiness levels. Flexible grouping practices are a key differentiation strategy and are created based on ongoing classroom assessments, student interests, and learning needs. For example:

- AIG students are homogeneously grouped in reading and/or math content areas and flexibly regrouped within AIG classrooms.
- Students with advanced learning needs are included in the school-based talent development program and are cluster-grouped in classrooms.
- In general education settings, students are flexibly grouped for differentiation based on formative assessments to provide targeted instruction and support.

Additionally, AIG teachers and instructional support staff collaborate with general education teachers to analyze assessment data during Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and professional development meetings. These collaborative opportunities support data-driven instructional planning, differentiation strategies, and intentional grouping decisions. The AIG Department, in partnership with instructional support staff and teachers, develops specific enrichment and extension opportunities aligned with AIG curriculum framework and learner objectives.

The AIG curriculum framework incorporates universal themes and generalities, to align the North Carolina Standard Course Of Study (NCSROS), the AIG replacement curriculum, and enrichment/extension opportunities. This framework aids teachers in differentiating instruction by addressing individual strengths, interests, and areas for growth. Ongoing data analysis also supports instructional effectiveness and provides insight into student growth, allowing teachers to adjust differentiation practices for subsequent units.

Open communication and data-driven collaboration within PLCs, professional learning, and MTSS protocols support the delivery of appropriately challenging instruction for gifted and advanced learners.

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

At Union County Public Schools (UCPS), collaboration among educators, instructional support and student services personnel is central to providing advanced and gifted learners with differentiated curriculum and instruction aligned to their strengths and learning needs. This work begins with a shared understanding that all educators play a role in addressing the academic, social, and emotional growth of gifted and advanced students.

Instructional support personnel, AIG teachers and classroom teachers work hand-in-hand to plan and implement differentiated content resources. Through regular grade-level meetings and professional learning communities (PLCs), educators collaborate to design instruction that allows advanced and gifted learners to extend beyond basic content. These collaborative discussions focus on strategies such as flexible grouping and differentiation strategies that support students being challenged at appropriate levels. During these meetings, guiding questions are used to prompt reflection and problem-solving, such as:

- What do we want all students to know and be able to do?
- How will we know if they learned it?
- How will we respond when students do not learn?
- How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

In addition to school-level collaboration, AIG representatives are active participants in district instructional teams, including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) meetings. These district-level partnerships allow for advocacy around differentiation practices and provide opportunities to integrate advanced learning strategies across all schools. For instance, district leadership has prioritized professional development to equip all teachers and instructional support staff with tools for differentiation, such as scaffolded instruction, advanced questioning techniques, and the use of pre-assessments to guide instructional pacing.

Support for twice-exceptional learners is another critical focus of collaboration. AIG coordinators and AIG teachers work closely with general education teachers, instructional support staff, and members of the exceptional children's department to identify modifications and accommodations that leverage students' strengths while addressing their challenges. Tools like executive functioning supports, metacognitive strategies, and individualized scaffolds support learners.

UCPS also recognizes the importance of monitoring the implementation of differentiated practices. AIG personnel and instructional staff collaborate to evaluate the effectiveness of advanced units and make necessary adjustments to meet student needs. The Honors Level Coursework Development and Evaluation Tool serves as a guide for planning rigorous, differentiated instruction and supports consistent expectations for advanced and gifted learners across the district.

At its heart, this collaborative approach empowers advanced and gifted learners to stretch their thinking, pursue their interests, and engage in meaningful and challenging learning experiences. Through dedicated time for planning, problem-solving, and reflection, instructional personnel continue to refine practices that allow gifted and advanced learners to thrive.

#### \* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard

- Intentional Collaboration with Stakeholders to Improve Implementation
- Exploring Options for a Talent Development Vision Team
- Revitalizing Pilot Programs
- Shifting Mindsets Regarding Gifted and Advanced Learner Needs
- Exploring Options for Differentiation for Non-ELA/Mathematics Courses/Curriculum
- Improve Tools for Tracking Student Outcomes

#### Planned Sources of Evidence

* Meeting Agendas, Notes & Feedback Forms	
* Talent Development Vision Team Documents	
* Pilot Program Documents	
* Classroom Walkthrough Data	
* Automatically Collected Student Data	

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 3 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#">AIG Curriculum Framework &amp; Objectives</a>

**Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development**

**Union County Public Schools (900) 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.

UCPS employs at least two AIG-licensed AIG Coordinators, who work under the supervision of the AIG Director, at the Central Services level to provide district-wide coordination of the AIG program and plan.

**AIG Director**

The **AIG Director** oversees the planning, implementation, monitoring, and revision of the district's AIG program. Their responsibilities include:

- **Guiding:** Providing leadership and advocacy for AIG programming by supporting district and school-level leaders, AIG teachers, the AIG Parent Advisory Council, and other stakeholders. The AIG Director also collaborates with district-level MTSS teams to align gifted education services with broader district goals and to advocate for the needs of AIG students in a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) context.
- **Planning and Developing:** Collaborating with district leadership so that the Local Plan for Gifted Education reflects alignment with state guidelines, instructional priorities, and student needs. This work includes supporting the budgeting, staffing, and the development of differentiated curriculum and resources.
- **Implementing:** Coordinating professional development for AIG educators, monitoring service delivery, and facilitating opportunities for gifted learners. Professional development opportunities are differentiated to address the varying needs of educators in elementary, middle, and high schools.
- **Revising and Monitoring:** Leading the required evaluation and revision process of the Local Plan for Gifted Education. This includes gathering and analyzing feedback from stakeholders, such as the AIG Parent Advisory Council (PAC), AIG Teacher Advisory Council (TAC), and school-based AIG teams, to identify areas for improvement.
- **Additional Duties:** Maintaining accurate student identification records, supporting licensure for AIG educators, and engaging with state and regional organizations to stay informed on trends and policies in gifted education.

**AIG Coordinator**

The **AIG Coordinators** (AIG licensed) report to the AIG Director and provide additional district-level oversight and support for the AIG program. Their responsibilities include:

- **Guiding:** Serving as a resource for AIG educators, parents, and school leaders to support compliance with the Local AIG Plan. The AIG coordinators provide coaching, conduct site visits, and facilitate feedback loops to promote consistent implementation of AIG services.
- **Planning and Developing:** Collaborating with district MTSS teams to integrate AIG strategies into broader instructional and intervention efforts. Coordinators also lead the development of curriculum resources and differentiation strategies for K-12.
- **Implementing:** Facilitating professional development and coordinating regular AIG PLC meetings to strengthen the capacity of AIG staff members and support consistent implementation of services across the district.
- **Revising and Monitoring:** Collecting data on program performance and collaborating with school-based AIG teams to identify and address gaps in service delivery. Coordinators also lead periodic reviews of program effectiveness through surveys, audits, and stakeholder feedback sessions.

- **Additional Duties:** Facilitating communication between stakeholders via regular updates and sharing resources through digital platforms like Canvas site and using district communication channels.

\* **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.

UCPS educators work together to support the needs of AIG students in grades K-12.

#### AIG Teacher:

AIG teachers are either AIG-licensed or locally endorsed to work directly with AIG students. Their daily schedule is conducive to serving AIG students and supporting the AIG program at the school. An AIG teachers' instructional schedule should provide at least 60 minutes or more of replacement curriculum gifted instruction for their subject area(s) of record (reading and math instruction) daily. If the school schedule permits additional time for gifted learners to be with the AIG teacher it is always beneficial.

Each elementary and middle school has at least one AIG-licensed teacher responsible for:

- **Guiding:** Monitoring and supporting the implementation of the AIG program at their school.
  - **Planning and Developing:** Delivering a replacement curriculum in reading and math (grades 4-5 in elementary and ELA/Math for grades 6-8 in middle school).
  - **Implementing:** Supporting appropriate placement and instruction of AIG students and documenting services provided.
  - **Revising and Monitoring:** Maintaining accurate student files, analyzing student performance, and collaborating with their school's AIG Team.
- Additional duties are assigned at the principal's discretion and should consider the additional time AIG teachers need to monitor the AIG program and student progress, adhere to compliance requirements, communicate with families, and provide guidance and support for colleagues and the school-based AIG Team. Additional duties could include, but are not limited to:
- Instructional and self-management skills support for gifted learners
  - Enrichment services
  - Talent development services
  - Monitoring and support for whole grade and/or subject accelerated students
  - Supporting the school and families with evidence-based best practices in gifted education and inquiries about gifted services

#### School-Based AIG Team

Each elementary and middle school has an AIG Team composed of an administrator or designee, general education teachers, AIG teachers, and the school counselor. This team is responsible for:

- Screening and identifying gifted students.
- Monitoring program implementation and placement decisions.
- Providing guidance so that AIG services are responsive to student needs.

UCPS is developing plans to establish AIG Teams at high schools to support consistent service delivery across all grade levels. These teams will collaborate with counseling departments and other support services to support that AIG students' academic and self-management needs are met.

UCPS is also exploring options for increasing the number of AIG-licensed educators at the high school level to:

- Monitor compliance with the AIG Plan and services.
- Provide instructional support for advanced courses (e.g., AP, IB, and Honors).
- Partner with school counselors to address the self-management needs of gifted students.
- Facilitate training for teachers and staff to increase awareness of gifted students' academic and self-management needs.

\* **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.

The AIG Department has developed a comprehensive Professional Development Plan (PDP) that outlines strategies, goals, and desired outcomes for the professional development of educators. The PDP is revisited annually to incorporate stakeholder feedback and address expressed needs regarding gifted services, support for gifted learners, and the dissemination of best practices and resources. This plan serves as part of a **professional development framework** designed to establish clear goals for interactions with various stakeholder groups. Each professional development session has targeted outcomes aimed at increasing understanding of gifted education, gifted learners, and gifted programming.

### **Professional Development for AIG Classroom Teachers**

The AIG Department requires AIG teachers to attend monthly professional development sessions, which equip them with resources and training to assume leadership roles in delivering instructional support and professional development at their schools. These teachers present information to staff, students, and parents through curriculum nights, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), open houses, parent nights, and staff meetings. Standardized presentations are developed centrally and shared with AIG teachers to support consistency across the district.

AIG teachers are provided with training on delivering these presentations effectively and addressing specific AIG-related questions. Additionally, they are encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities such as:

- The North Carolina Association of Gifted and Talented (NCAGT) annual conference
- Monthly AIG PLC meetings focusing on best practices in gifted education, curriculum development, and assessment strategies
- Vertical alignment meetings to support continuity across grade levels
- Virtual webinars on gifted education topics, including differentiation and the academic, intellectual, and self-management needs of gifted learners
- Data-driven differentiation strategies using universal screener results

**Application to Daily Instruction:** AIG teachers use the training provided to implement practical differentiation strategies, such as tiered assignments, curriculum compacting, and flexible grouping, to appropriately challenge gifted learners. AIG teachers collaborate with instructional support staff and general education classroom teachers to develop enrichment opportunities tailored to individual student needs.

### **Professional Development for Instructional Support Staff & Classroom Teachers**

Instructional support staff are integral in supporting classroom teachers to implement differentiation strategies. They are provided with professional development opportunities designed to enhance their understanding of:

- Differentiation techniques and strategies for gifted and advanced learners
- Using data from universal screeners to inform instruction
- Advanced curriculum design and alignment with AIG programming
- Supporting twice-exceptional (2e) students and multilingual gifted learners

Instructional support staff receive targeted training on supporting classroom teachers in implementing advanced instructional strategies for gifted learners. Topics include differentiation techniques, the use of student data to guide instruction, and coaching strategies for working with teachers. Instructional support staff collaborate with AIG Teachers, and AIG Coordinators to model instructional practices and provide individualized coaching to classroom teachers.

To support sustained impact, instructional support staff participate in PLCs to share best practices and address common challenges. Training for instructional support staff incorporates tools and resources from the NCDPI Advanced Learning and Gifted Education division and the AIG Department to support consistency with state standards.

General education classroom teachers working with AIG students are required to complete professional development on differentiation strategies and best practices for gifted and advanced learners. These sessions include topics such as identifying gifted learners, developing self-management skills, integrating higher-order thinking skills into daily instruction, grouping practices, and designing curriculum aligned with the needs of AIG and advanced students. Teachers are encouraged to participate in district-led opportunities such as the AIG Academy, a year-long course, and collaboration with AIG coordinators and AIG teachers. Successful completion of the AIG Academy allows teachers to sit for the AIG Praxis exam, and reimbursement is available for those passing within one year of program completion.

Additionally, all classroom teachers must complete ongoing training on the integration of gifted services within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), differentiation for multilingual and twice-exceptional learners, and the use of student data to inform instruction. These training sessions may be delivered in person, online, or through collaborative workshops with neighboring districts. Follow-up support is provided through school-based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), peer mentoring, and classroom coaching sessions facilitated by instructional support personnel.

To evaluate teacher effectiveness in serving AIG students, administrators will use classroom observation tools that focus on differentiation practices, evidence of student engagement, and alignment with the AIG plan. Feedback will be provided to teachers as part of their professional growth plans.

### **Professional Development for Student Services Personnel**

Student services staff, including school counselors and social workers, receive professional development on the self-management needs of gifted learners. Training sessions emphasize strategies to support students in managing stress, perfectionism, and other challenges. Counselors are also provided with resources to guide students in selecting rigorous academic opportunities, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, and college dual-enrollment options.

To strengthen the connection between professional development and student outcomes, counselors are encouraged to participate in annual collaborative meetings with AIG Teachers to align services and discuss student progress. Counselors will also complete training on how to incorporate strategies for gifted students into school wide learning initiatives. To address the unique self-management and academic needs of gifted learners, professional development for student services personnel, including school counselors, emphasizes:

- The Portrait of a Graduate Framework & activities for supporting the development of durable skills for gifted students (K-12)
- Best practices for counseling gifted students through virtual and in-person sessions
- Collaborating with teachers and administrators to create a supportive school environment for AIG and advanced students
- Guidance sessions and/or peer mentoring groups to support the needs of gifted students

**Collaboration and Practical Implementation:** School counselors use training to lead small group or individual counseling sessions for gifted learners, particularly those struggling with perfectionism or underachievement. Counselors also collaborate with teachers to address the self-management needs of 2e students by designing individualized support plans that balance academic rigor with emotional wellness.

The AIG Department is currently developing additional targeted training for school counselors, particularly for addressing the needs of secondary gifted students.

## Professional Development for School Administrators

Professional development for school administrators focuses on building instructional leadership to support gifted and advanced learners and their teachers effectively. Administrators receive training through:

- General principal meetings, where the AIG Director or designee provides updates and recommendations related to AIG programming, services, and compliance with the Local AIG Plan
- School-based training sessions on topics such as identification criteria, differentiation strategies, and the importance of access points for gifted learners
- Professional development on leveraging universal screener data to support school-wide differentiation and enrichment opportunities

Administrators participate in professional development focused on building their understanding of gifted education and supporting AIG programming at their schools. This includes training on scheduling that allows for adequate instructional time for AIG services, supporting staff in implementing differentiation strategies, and promoting a school-wide culture of excellence for advanced learners. Administrators also receive guidance on evaluating teacher effectiveness in meeting the needs of gifted students, supporting compliance with AIG program requirements, and facilitating collaboration between AIG Teachers, instructional support staff and general education staff.

To evaluate teacher effectiveness, administrators will utilize tools such as a district-provided Walkthrough Tool, which includes criteria for observing evidence of gifted programming (e.g., instructional pacing, enrichment opportunities, and use of student data). Administrators will be trained to provide specific, actionable feedback to teachers during post-observation conferences.

**Building a Supportive School Culture:** Administrators are equipped to establish and maintain a school culture that prioritizes gifted education by providing that all teachers have access to resources and training. For example, administrators might create schedules that allow for regular collaboration between AIG teachers, instructional support staff, and classroom teachers or allocate time during staff meetings for gifted education updates.

Additionally, administrators are encouraged to attend AIG-related conferences and training sessions to deepen their understanding of how to support both educators and gifted learners.

### Monitoring and Evaluating Professional Development Effectiveness:

To support the effectiveness of professional development offerings, UCPS will:

- Conduct annual surveys of certified staff and administrators to determine training needs related to gifted education
- Analyze professional development participation rates and evaluate the impact of training through teacher and administrator feedback.
- Monitor implementation of learned strategies through classroom observations, student performance data, and follow-up discussions in PLCs.
- Use results from these evaluations to refine and adjust professional development plans.

## New Initiatives Under Development

UCPS is currently piloting several new professional development initiatives to enhance AIG programming:

- Professional development for K-3 educators to implement enrichment strategies for all students (pilot schools)
- Training opportunities targeting teachers with the Portrait of a Graduate initiative, with a focus on implementing durable skills development into classroom instruction.
- Localized training to support educators seeking AIG licensure or local endorsement.
- Professional development for high school educators (AP and Honors teachers) to address the unique needs of gifted learners in advanced courses
- Leverage AIG coordinators, AIG teachers, and district-endorsed facilitators to provide professional development tailored to specific roles and needs.
- Encourage collaborative opportunities across schools and districts to share resources, conduct site visits, and facilitate networking for stakeholders.

- Develop partnerships with external organizations to provide additional training opportunities for educators, including professional organizations focused on gifted education.

By outlining clear expectations, providing targeted professional development, and implementing systems for evaluation and follow-up, UCPSS supports all stakeholders—classroom teachers, instructional support staff, student services personnel, and administrators—in being equipped to meet the needs of AIG students effectively.

**\* 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.

AIG students in grades 4-8 are served in their strength areas (reading and/or math) in dedicated AIG classrooms. For other subject areas across K-12, AIG students are placed in general education settings using a cluster grouping model designed to provide effective, targeted instruction. This placement process is guided by district-defined criteria, which are shared with school-based administrators to promote consistency and access schools.

To support appropriate educator placement, the district follows a clear process for assigning teachers who are prepared to meet the needs of AIG students. This process includes:

- **Cluster Placement Guidelines:** AIG students are cluster grouped in general classrooms for subjects other than math and/or reading. The teachers have met the LEA requirements for the position. These guidelines are communicated annually to principals and school-based leadership teams to support consistent implementation.
- **Monitoring Teacher Assignments:** The AIG Department maintains a monitoring system to track the assignment of students to AIG-licensed teachers or those meeting LEA certification requirements. This data is reviewed biannually and shared with principals and district leadership. If gaps or misalignments are identified, corrective actions, such as reallocating staff or offering additional professional development, are taken.

**LEA Requirements for an AIG Position:**

The district supports educator preparation through the AIG Academy Course, a professional development program open to all Union County Public Schools (UCPS) educators. The course is designed to:

- Increase teacher effectiveness in working with gifted and advanced learners through evidence-based differentiation strategies
- Develop teacher capacity to address the needs of AIG students
- Provide specific training in advanced instructional strategies, such as curriculum compacting and grouping.

The course, facilitated by AIG-licensed coordinators, equips participants with a foundational understanding of the characteristics, instructional strategies, and needs of gifted learners. Participants develop a portfolio of artifacts demonstrating their ability to implement these strategies. Portfolios are evaluated using a rubric, and participants who meet the criteria earn CEUs. Those who need additional support to meet the rubric standards are given personalized feedback and opportunities to resubmit their work.

To support educators pursuing full AIG licensure, the AIG Academy Course includes an optional module designed to prepare participants for the AIG Praxis (5358). Educators who successfully pass the Praxis after completing the course are eligible for reimbursement from the AIG Department. Graduates of the AIG Academy Course also serve as mentors for future cohorts, creating a sustainable cycle of support and capacity-building within the district.

While the AIG Academy Course meets the LEA's requirements for AIG positions, it does not replace state licensure and is non-transferable to other districts. Educators seeking full licensure must either complete the required coursework at an approved institution or pass the AIG Praxis with a minimum score of 157. The AIG Department maintains a publicly accessible list of educators who have completed the course to facilitate effective placement and transparency.

**Protocols for Cluster Grouping:**

The district has established clear protocols for AIG student placement in classrooms. School-based administrators work closely with the AIG Department to support:

- AIG students are grouped effectively in general education classrooms for other subject areas.
- Cluster grouping is implemented with fidelity across all schools.
- Educators assigned to these clusters meet the district's AIG certification requirements.

Additionally, the district offers ongoing professional development opportunities for all educators through its staff development channels. These include localized training, mentorship from experienced AIG teachers, and encouragement to attend the North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented (NAGT) annual conference. These efforts are designed to keep all stakeholders informed about best practices and updated strategies in gifted education.

\* **Practice E**  
Develops strategies for the recruitment and retention of AIG-licensed professionals, including those of diverse backgrounds.

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) recognizes the critical importance of recruiting and retaining a broad, highly qualified pool of AIG-licensed professionals to meet the educational needs of our gifted learners. To achieve this, the district has developed a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy designed to attract, support, and retain exceptional AIG professionals from different backgrounds.

**Retention Strategy for AIG-Licensed Professionals:** UCPS partners with principals to conduct a thorough analysis of staffing needs that align with the AIG service delivery as outlined in the Local AIG Plan. By identifying gaps in staffing early, the district is able to strategically place AIG-licensed professionals where they are needed most--particularly in schools with a higher concentration of gifted students. This targeted approach to staffing helps support efforts to meet the needs of all learners.

In terms of recruitment efforts, UCPS collaborates with local institutions of higher education (IHEs) to create opportunities for general education teachers and other support staff to earn the AIG add-on license. These partnerships focus on providing flexible, accessible coursework for teachers, and we offer professional development opportunities to prepare staff for the Praxis exam, which is required for licensure. To further support teachers in their professional growth, UCPS works with regional educational service agencies (RESAs) and IHEs to provide additional local and regional professional development opportunities aimed at increasing the number of AIG-licensed educators. Additionally, the district provides financial support to teachers who are pursuing their AIG add-on license, through the AIG Academy training that includes exam preparation and reimbursement for the Praxis.

The district also uses the application system to filter for candidates who hold AIG licensure or Gifted Certification from outside North Carolina. To support the selection of candidates with the skills necessary to serve gifted and advanced learners, the interview process includes targeted questions about strategies for meeting the needs of gifted and advanced learners. By embedding these questions into our hiring process, we strengthen alignment between candidate expertise and the district's mission of providing high-quality instruction for all students.

**Retention Strategy for AIG-Licensed Professionals:** To retain AIG-licensed professionals, UCPS is committed to providing ongoing support and recognition. Teachers who earn their AIG add-on license through the AIG Academy will be offered a commitment agreement, encouraging them to continue serving in the district for a designated period of time. The purpose of this agreement is to maximize the impact of professional development investments by promoting sustained services within a district.

In addition to the commitment agreement, UCPS recognizes the accomplishments of teachers who have earned AIG licensure in other ways. Teachers who complete the licensure process are publicly celebrated during district-wide events, providing them with the recognition they deserve for their dedication to serving gifted learners. Recognizing staff efforts helps cultivate a supportive professional culture, positively influencing job satisfaction and retention.

Furthermore, the district continuously evaluates retention strategies to promote a supportive, engaging environment where AIG professionals feel valued in their work. Regular professional learning communities (PLCs), mentorship opportunities with experienced AIG educators, and access to ongoing professional

development are critical components of our retention efforts. These initiatives help AIG teachers feel connected to the district's goals, build a sense of community, and support their continued growth as educators.

**Strengthening Recruitment and Retention:** UCPS is committed to strengthening its recruitment and retention strategies by expanding outreach and building a highly qualified workforce. As part of these efforts, the district targets a wide range of candidates from institutions that prepare educators from varied backgrounds. Recruitment materials and communications emphasize UCPS's commitment to serving all learners, including students identified as gifted, and highlight efforts to provide high-quality educational opportunities across the district.

In terms of retention, UCPS actively promotes a professional and collaborative work environment. We provide professional development so that our staff—especially those working with AIG students—are prepared to support a broad range of student needs. This includes addressing the self-management needs of gifted learners and equipping AIG-licensed professionals with the tools they need to serve the full spectrum of students in our district.

Through a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy, UCPS aims to build and sustain a workforce equipped to provide effective gifted education services. By focusing on recruitment, support for licensure, and targeted financial assistance, the district is committed to creating an environment where AIG-licensed professionals thrive and remain in the district for the long term. These efforts are critical to providing high-quality educational opportunities for our gifted students.

#### \* Practice F

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

The district's commitment to realizing access and excellence in gifted education is built upon a data-driven and collaborative approach to professional learning. To effectively determine the district's professional development needs regarding mindsets, policies, and practices, we will begin with a comprehensive assessment of current staff understanding and district-level policies. This assessment will be informed by feedback from teachers, administrators, and stakeholders, with a specific focus on identifying gaps in the understanding of giftedness, including the experiences of student groups such as Black, Hispanic, multilingual learners, and twice-exceptional students, whose strengths may not be fully recognized through traditional practices. Additionally, we will analyze district performance data, review identification procedures, and assess current practices to strengthen opportunities for students who participate in gifted education services.

Once these needs are identified, we will develop and implement a targeted professional development plan. This plan will focus on the critical actions necessary to support excellence in gifted education and will help all educators understand how to create learning environments that meet the needs of students from a variety of backgrounds. The professional learning opportunities will address patterns and trends in order to meet the needs of gifted learners. To meet these goals, the district will collaborate with academic leadership to provide professional development sessions that produce learning experiences that are both comprehensive and multi-faceted.

Key components of the professional development plan will include:

- **Targeted Workshops and Training:** Workshops will be based on research and evidence-based practices, as well as strategies to support student populations whose strengths may not be readily identified through traditional methods. NCDPI resources such as the Call to Action, Guidebook, and Guidebook 2.0 will be utilized.
- **Interactive Learning Modules:** Online or in-person modules that explore the myths and realities of giftedness, provide case studies, and offer actionable strategies for engaging learners in gifted education. These modules will focus on shifting mindsets and equipping teachers to recognize and support the full range of gifted learners.
- **Mentorship and Peer Learning:** Establishing mentorship programs where experienced AIG educators and curriculum facilitators collaborate with colleagues across schools to offer guidance and share best practices for implementing effective gifted education strategies.
- **Ongoing Reflection and Feedback:** Structured opportunities for teachers and administrators to reflect on their professional learning through collaborative planning and feedback loops. These opportunities are designed as an ongoing process focused on continuous improvement, rather than a one-time event.

Additionally, the district will partner with district leadership, instructional support staff, and school-based AIG teams to implement professional development opportunities at the school and district levels. Regular collaboration will support the implementation of ongoing professional learning that is embedded in school practices, focused on instructional improvement, and responsive to each school's goals.

The district will also work to develop a book study series using professional resources provided by NCDPI or local districts. These resources will focus on gifted education, offering participants an opportunity to engage with research and discussion topics in depth. The book studies will be designed to promote active discussion and support educators as they implement strategies for improving the access and excellence of their gifted programs.

Finally, we will align this professional development plan with the district's broader strategic goals in order to support both the district's commitment to academic excellence and the specific needs of our student population. Leveled principal meetings, AIG academies, and school-based AIG team meetings will advance ongoing professional learning, while collaboration within the Academics Division will align all components of the district's gifted education efforts.

- \* **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.

The AIG Department works in close partnership with the district's professional development department to align professional development (PD) opportunities with the goals of the local AIG program, other district initiatives, and evidence-based practices. This alignment is further supported by regular collaboration between AIG leadership and district committees that set the vision, mission, and priorities for the district--helping to integrate the needs of AIG students and teachers into broader district planning and decision-making.

### **Alignment with Local AIG Program Goals:**

The district's Local AIG Plan prioritizes the academic and self-management development of gifted learners, emphasizing differentiated instruction and durable skills support. Professional development activities are closely tied to these goals, with specific objectives designed to equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to support the wide range of needs of gifted learners across the district. For example, PD opportunities focus on providing differentiated instruction, addressing the unique needs of twice-exceptional (2e) and Multilingual (ML) gifted learners, and utilizing effective strategies to support gifted students.

### **Integration with Other District Initiatives:**

AIG professional development is seamlessly integrated with district-wide initiatives such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), district initiatives, and School Improvement Plans (SIPs). For instance, AIG training is embedded within the district's MTSS framework to support appropriate levels of service for gifted learners within a tiered system. AIG coordinators collaborate with MTSS teams at both the school and district levels to align AIG goals with broader educational priorities and to promote consistent support for gifted learners within these frameworks.

Additionally, AIG educators are involved in district-wide initiatives aimed at expanding learning opportunities for all students, including gifted learners from a range of backgrounds. By working with instructional support personnel and other district departments, the AIG Department helps align professional development with district priorities related to student achievement and instructional improvement.

### **Structures for Facilitating Collaboration:**

A well-defined structure for collaboration exists at multiple levels of the district. AIG coordinators and general education teachers collaborate regularly through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), co-planning sessions, and vertical alignment meetings. AIG teachers meet with instructional support staff and

general education teachers to focus on differentiating instruction and refining strategies to support gifted learners. These sessions are designed to allow teachers to share resources, discuss challenges, and co-create instructional strategies that align with the district's gifted education goals.

In addition to formal collaboration in PLCs, AIG coordinators also collaborate with instructional support staff and other educators through meetings to discuss best practices for serving gifted learners, share student data, and develop action plans for addressing identified gaps. This collaboration supports a continuous cycle of learning and refinement among all stakeholders.

The AIG Department also partners with instructional support staff to provide professional development that prepares teachers to apply both theory and practice in meeting the needs of gifted and advanced learners. This collaboration extends to providing opportunities for peer observations, where teachers can observe and learn from one another, as well as providing one-on-one coaching and mentoring to refine instructional practices.

### **Refinement of Professional Learning:**

The district's PD framework is designed to be dynamic and responsive to emerging needs and feedback from educators. Each PD opportunity is followed by feedback loops where participants can reflect on what they learned, share challenges, and discuss how they are implementing new strategies in their classrooms. This feedback is then used to refine future PD offerings and adjust content to better meet the evolving needs of educators and students.

In addition to formal PD sessions, there is an emphasis on coaching and reflection, where educators are provided with opportunities to apply learning in real-time and refine their practices based on their experiences. For example, after attending a PD session on differentiation, teachers may work with an instructional coach or AIG coordinator to integrate the new strategies into their lessons, receive feedback, and participate in follow-up PD sessions that address ongoing challenges and successes.

### **AIG Program Goals and Professional Development Objectives:**

The professional development goals for AIG teachers are aligned directly with the goals of the local AIG program. These goals emphasize:

- The development and implementation of differentiated instruction for gifted learners.
- Addressing the self-management skill needs of gifted students, including strategies for identifying and supporting students who experience heightened stress or anxiety related to their abilities.
- Supporting all educators—AIG teachers, general education teachers, and instructional support staff—are equipped to collaborate effectively to support the needs of advanced and gifted learners.

For example, in the PD framework, the objective "Develop expertise in differentiated instruction for gifted learners" includes a specific focus on adapting curriculum to meet the needs of gifted learners, collaborating across grade levels, and aligning strategies with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The district also provides opportunities for educators to work together to refine their practice in these areas and reflect on their impact on gifted learners.

### **Collaboration with School Specific Goals:**

The integration of AIG goals into school-specific goals supports alignment between the district's approach to gifted education and the broader school improvement efforts. As part of this process, AIG coordinators collaborate with school leadership teams to assess the effectiveness of gifted education programs, identify areas for growth, and create action plans that support the academic and self-management skill development success of gifted students. This alignment contributes to consistent implementation of AIG services across schools and reinforces their connection to district-wide strategies for improving student outcomes.

### \* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard

- Developing AIG Teams at the High School Level
- Increasing Enrollment in AIG Academy (Local Endorsement Program)
- Improve Instructional Support for Teachers
- Expanding Professional Development Options for All Educators
- Increasing Collaboration Between AIG Coordinators and Instructional Facilitators
- Explore Options to Monitor Cluster Grouping

### Planned Sources of Evidence

* Meeting Agendas, Notes & Feedback Forms	
* AIG Academy Documents	
* Professional Development Documents	
* Classroom Walkthroughs & Coaching Notes	

Type	Documents	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 4 Additional Resources	N/A		 <a href="#">AIG PD Framework</a>  <a href="#">AIG Glossary</a> .

## Standard 5: Partnerships

### Union County Public Schools (900) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0

#### **Standard 5: Partnerships**

*The LEA ensures ongoing and meaningful participation of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the local A/G program to develop strong partnerships.*

##### \* **Practice A**

Develops intentional, two-way partnerships with parents/guardians to support the following needs of A/G students:

- academic and intellectual
- social and emotional.

UCPS is committed to building intentional, two-way partnerships with parents and guardians to support the academic, intellectual, and self-management needs of A/G students. By creating opportunities for shared decision-making, active engagement, and collaborative problem-solving, we aim to meet the needs of gifted learners while valuing the unique contributions of their families.

#### **Communication and Accessibility**

UCPS provides access to resources and communication materials for all families. Written communication is provided in both English and Spanish, including sections of the website, informational brochures, and official forms used for A/G placement and services. Additional language requests are accommodated as needed, and the UCPS website features a universal translator to support multilingual families.

#### **Parent Engagement and Collaborative Decision-Making**

##### 1. **AIG Parent Advisory Council (AIG-PAC)**

The AIG-PAC facilitates collaboration between parents, school staff, and community members to support shared decision-making for AIG programming. This council provides ongoing feedback on the implementation and monitoring of the local AIG plan and advocates for appropriate services for gifted learners. The council meets three times a school year to discuss programming updates, share perspectives, and co-develop strategies to address AIG students' needs.

##### 2. **AIG Parent Support Organization**

A proposed AIG Parent Support Organization will serve as a resource for parents, emphasizing their role in supporting both the academic and durable skill growth of gifted students. This group will organize workshops, share resources, and provide a space for parents to exchange ideas and support each other.

##### 3. **AIG Revision Team**

Every three years, the AIG Revision Team collaborates to evaluate and update the local AIG plan. Composed of a group of stakeholders—including AIG parents, administrators, teachers, and community members—the team incorporates multiple perspectives to keep programming responsive to the evolving needs of A/G learners.

## Ongoing Feedback and Evaluation

1. **AIG Stakeholder Surveys**  
Surveys are distributed to parents, students, educators, and administrators to assess satisfaction, gather suggestions, and evaluate program effectiveness. Results are used to inform program adjustments and improvement initiatives.
2. **Curriculum Nights**  
Each school hosts at least one curriculum night annually to introduce parents to the differentiated curriculum and instructional models used in AIG programs. These events provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions and collaborate with teachers in supporting their children's academic growth.
3. **School-Based Communication Plans**  
Each school has a tailored communication plan to keep parents informed and engaged. Plans include regular updates from AIG teachers, celebrations of student achievements, and opportunities for parents to participate in school-level initiatives. Meetings, such as DEP conferences, provide individualized opportunities for parents to contribute to their child's educational plan.

## Community Partnerships

1. **University Collaborations**  
UCPS maintains partnerships with institutions like UNC Charlotte (UNCC), South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) and Wingate University, offering opportunities for professional development and AIG licensure for local teachers. These collaborations strengthen the instructional practices used in AIG programming and connect parents with experts in gifted education through workshops and presentations.
2. **Community Events and Activities**  
UCPS partners with families to co-plan and implement enrichment activities such as competitions, clubs, and events that extend learning beyond the classroom. These events provide students with meaningful experiences while building stronger connections between schools and families.

## Intentional Two-Way Engagement

UCPS actively seeks input from parents through surveys, advisory councils, and open forums to provide families with a voice in program development. Parents are also invited to share their expertise by serving as guest speakers, organizing interest-based clubs, or volunteering in support of AIG programming. Through these partnerships, families contribute to the academic and emotional success of AIG students, while gaining tools and knowledge to support their children effectively.

## Outreach

To engage multilingual families and other communities, UCPS works to overcome language barriers. Translation services, multilingual staff, and intentional outreach strategies help all families access communication and engage in their child's education. These efforts are reflected in the district's Parent's Guide to Student Achievement and broader outreach initiatives.

### \* 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.

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) has established a network of dynamic partnerships that enhance and expand the opportunities available to gifted students and the educators who support them. These collaborative efforts are designed to enrich, extend, and accelerate learning for AIG students while increasing engagement from student groups that are typically less represented in gifted programs.

Within the district, UCPS works closely with various departments to address the needs of all students, including those who may face additional barriers to access. Partnerships with Counseling Services, the English as a Second Language (ESL) Department, Exceptional Children (EC) Services, Homeless Family Services, Latino Outreach, and Title I collectively provide a foundation for targeted support. For instance, Counseling Services helps address the self-management and career planning needs of gifted learners, while the ESL and EC departments provide targeted support for Multilingual Learners (MLs) and Twice-Exceptional (2e) Students.

Beyond the district, UCPS has forged strong relationships with institutions of higher education, including UNC Charlotte (UNCC), South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) and Wingate University. These partnerships play a crucial role in shaping and improving the district's gifted program. Together, we develop and refine the district's three-year AIG plan, offer licensure coursework for educators seeking AIG certification, and provide a variety of enrichment opportunities for students. Additionally, these institutions host workshops for parents and teachers, helping them understand and respond to the unique needs of gifted learners.

Programs like dual enrollment through SPCC's Career and College Promise (CCP) program exemplify how partnerships provide acceleration opportunities for high school students. These students earn both high school and college credits, enabling them to meet graduation requirements while beginning their post-secondary education. Similarly, the Union County Early College program, in collaboration with SPCC, offers rising ninth graders—particularly first-generation college students—a pathway to academic success.

An additional program UCPS offers is the Wayfind Program. This program is for students who have faced barriers to higher education and who exhibit academic potential as reflected in their performance, attendance, and conduct. It is a free college-access program that pairs middle and high school students with mentors from Wingate University.

Community involvement also plays a vital role in supporting gifted education. Atrium Health, for example, has partnered with East Elementary, Walter Bickett Elementary, Monroe Middle School, and Monroe High School to establish a healthcare-focused STEM pathway. A full-time STEM teacher bridges the hospital and the schools, creating innovative learning experiences that connect students with real-world applications in science and medicine.

The Union County Education Foundations provides grants for innovative classroom projects, including those that benefit gifted learners. These grants often are used to fund enrichment programs like competitions and field trips.

UCPS is continuously seeking to expand opportunities for students and educators. Current efforts include exploring partnerships with the local Chambers of Commerce to develop mentorship programs and job shadowing opportunities, Google for STEM-based summer camps, Khan Academy for advanced mathematics resources, LEGO Education for hands-on STEM projects, and the Union County Parks and Recreation Department to explore options for outdoor learning and environmental science programs. The district is also working with the Union County Public Library to curate grade-specific summer reading lists designed to challenge and engage gifted learners.

These partnerships not only benefit students but also support professional growth for educators. UNCC and Wingate University, for instance, offer AIG licensure programs and host professional development sessions to share best practices in gifted education. By developing these relationships, UCPS helps teachers build the capacity to address the challenges and opportunities associated with teaching gifted learners.

Through these collaborations, the district creates a vibrant ecosystem that enriches learning, accelerates achievement, and provides meaningful support for gifted students and their families. As UCPS continues to cultivate and expand these partnerships, the focus remains on creating a future where every gifted learner has the tools and opportunities to thrive.

#### \* 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 teachers, AIG parents/guardians, AIG parents/guardians, and other instructional and support staff.

In our district, advisory groups play a vital role in shaping the local AIG program and helping it respond to the needs of all gifted learners. We have established a collaborative structure that brings together a wide range of stakeholders to develop, implement, monitor, and revise our AIG program and plan. These advisory groups reflect the populations of our district and include parents, educators, community members, and other key voices.

The **AIG Parent Advisory Council (PAC)** serves as a bridge between families and the AIG Department. Meeting three times a year, the PAC provides parents with an opportunity to share insights and advocate for the needs of gifted learners across the district. This group focuses on system-wide issues, such as enhancing support for gifted students and addressing questions or concerns related to the AIG plan. To strengthen partnerships, the PAC is actively expanding its membership to include families from all areas of the district. Additionally, the council is exploring options to host parent cluster meetings to support a two-way dialogue and gather feedback that informs program improvements. A member of the PAC is a person from AIG Teacher Advisory Council (TAC).

Similarly, the **AIG Teacher Advisory Council (TAC)** provides a platform for educators to share their expertise and collaborate on the implementation of the AIG plan. Like the PAC, the TAC meets three times a year to discuss issues such as identification practices, professional development needs, and curriculum enhancements. Membership includes AIG educators across grade spans, providing a comprehensive perspective. Through open communication, the TAC creates space for educators to voice their needs and offer suggestions that directly shape the AIG program.

The **AIG Steering Committee** serves as a key advisory body in the development, implementation, monitoring, and revision of the local AIG program and plan. The committee includes representatives from different departments within the academics and school performance divisions to provide a wide range of perspectives that are engaged in shaping the shared vision for AIG services across the district.

The steering committee plays a critical role in guiding the work of the AIG Revision Team and helps align gifted services with broader district goals. In collaboration with district leadership, the committee supports ongoing efforts to inform policy, refine practices, and promote instructional approaches that meet the needs of advanced and gifted learners. Their input also helps build a shared ownership of the AIG plan that supports a consistent, system-wide approach to serving our students.

To promote broader community representation, the district established the **AIG Revision Team**. This team includes stakeholders from across the district, such as community members, counselors, principals, district leaders, members from the PAC and TAC, and specialists in areas such as English as a Second Language (ESL), Exceptional Children (EC), and Title I. By reviewing district demographic data, we work to include voices that represent the full range of student experiences across our schools. Partnerships with local organizations—such as arts groups, faith-based agencies, and service organizations—help recruit representatives who bring varied perspectives and experiences to the table.

Each advisory group works collaboratively to support the development, monitoring, and evaluation of the AIG program. For example, each group plays a pivotal role in reviewing program data, such as identification rates and feedback from stakeholders, to assess the effectiveness of the program's implementation. Their insights help identify strengths, uncover areas for improvement, and drive meaningful revisions to the local plan. Regular meetings provide a space for structured discussions on goals, strategies, and recommendations, helping the program continue to evolve in response to the needs of gifted learners. The overlap of the group members creates opportunities for additional collaboration and idea sharing across the different groups.

Through the collective efforts of these advisory groups, the district works to keep its AIG program responsive to student needs and reflective of the broader school community. Through meaningful collaboration and stakeholder engagement, we remain focused on building a strong and responsive gifted education program.

**\* 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.

The district is deeply committed to maintaining clear and ongoing communication about gifted education so that all students, parents/guardians, and community members are informed about the Local AIG Plan, program services, policies, and advanced learning opportunities. By employing a range of strategies and intentional outreach, the district prioritizes consistent engagement to support the needs of all stakeholders.

To make information about the Local AIG Plan easily available, the district features it prominently on both the district and school websites. The AIG Plan is accompanied by a digital informational video that introduces families to the program, its services, and policies. This video—along with downloadable brochures, flyers, and a comprehensive AIG Handbook—helps build a shared understanding of key terms, policies, and services. Materials are translated into other languages to support communication with families. These resources are also widely distributed.

Throughout the year, each school hosts Open Houses, informational sessions, and virtual meetings to explain program offerings and help families understand how students can access advanced learning opportunities. School newsletters, featuring updates on services, events, and student success stories, are distributed through email, social media, and print formats to maintain ongoing communication. Automated calls, email notifications, and classroom announcements further keep families informed about upcoming opportunities.

The district and schools actively collaborate with civic organizations, local businesses, and community agencies to connect families with enrichment experiences such as mentorships, internships, and job-shadowing opportunities. A detailed annual resource guide highlights these programs, including timelines and contact information. Shared digitally and in print, this guide helps families explore a variety of academic and extracurricular offerings. Intentional efforts are made to communicate with families. Language interpreters are present at informational meetings, and translated materials are available at events and posted online. The district collaborates with partner organizations to provide promotional materials in families' native languages, supporting outreach efforts that reflect the needs of the community. For example, at opportunity fairs, organizations are encouraged to bring multilingual resources so that families feel welcomed and well-informed.

The district and schools recognize that communication must be ongoing, proactive, and celebratory. Regular updates are provided during school-based parent and student meetings and other stakeholder gatherings. Success stories of students are highlighted in local newspapers, district publications, and social media to increase community awareness in gifted services. Feedback loops, including surveys and parent advisory councils, provide families the opportunity to share input, helping the district continuously refine its communication efforts.

By leveraging digital tools, public events, printed materials, and community partnerships, the district and schools share information about the Local AIG Plan, services, policies, and advanced learning opportunities.

### **Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

- Continuous Improvement of AIG Website
- Developing an AIG-PAC Parent Network
- Developing Partnerships with Stakeholders
- Improve School-Based Communication Practices
- Explore Options for Increasing Community Awareness of AIG Services

### **Planned Sources of Evidence**

- \* AIG-PAC Documents & Focus Groups

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Meeting Agendas, Notes &amp; Feedback Forms</li> <li>* AIG Website Metrics</li> <li>* Surveys &amp; Feedback Tools</li> </ul>	<p><b>Type</b></p> <p>AIG Standard 5 Additional Resources</p>	<p><b>Documents</b></p> <p>Document Template</p> <p>N/A</p>	<p><b>Document/Link</b></p> <p> <a href="#"><u>Acknowledgements of Committee Members</u></a></p>
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**Standard 6: Program Accountability**

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

**\* Practice A**

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.

Every three years, Union County Public Schools (UCPS) undertakes a comprehensive evaluation and revision process for its Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Local Plan. This process is led by the AIG Program Director or designee and is designed to align the plan with state legislation, incorporate best practices in gifted education, and respond to the evolving needs of our students, families, and schools.

The revision process begins with a commitment to broad engagement and data-informed decision-making. UCPS actively involves a wide array of stakeholders—including district leadership, principals, teachers, parents, community members, students, and external partners—to develop a plan that incorporates perspectives from across the district's communities. Feedback is collected through stakeholder surveys, focus groups, interviews, advisory committees, and a dedicated revision team. These collaborative efforts provide a foundation for understanding the current state of the AIG program, celebrating successes, and identifying opportunities for improvement.

**Program Evaluation and Continuous Improvement**

UCPS employs a structured evaluation process that incorporates multiple perspectives and utilizes a variety of data points. This ongoing cycle helps keep the AIG program responsive to the needs of students and families while maintaining alignment with district priorities and state standards.

**1. Triennial Comprehensive Review:**

- Every three years, UCPS conducts an in-depth program evaluation, gathering feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including community members, parents, students, principals, AIG teachers, and general education teachers.
- Key data sources include demographic patterns, AIG student performance data, and program participation rates, with particular attention to excellence gaps affecting groups of students such as Black, Hispanic, and low-income.
- Data on curriculum differentiation, service delivery models, and program outcomes is analyzed to assess the overall effectiveness of the AIG program.
- Findings are presented to the UCPS Board of Education and incorporated into the revision process alongside feedback from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and the State Board of Education.

**2. Annual Evaluations:**

- Each year, student identification, placement, and retention processes are monitored to maintain compliance with the local plan.
- Enrollment data, achievement trends, and Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) growth data are reviewed to identify areas for improvement.
- Professional development needs are assessed to guide long-term planning, equipping teachers with strategies to meet both the academic and self-management needs of gifted learners.

### **3. Ongoing Monitoring:**

- Classroom visits, professional development feedback, and regular communication with stakeholders provide continuous insights into program implementation.
- The effectiveness of the replacement curriculum and self-management skills support for gifted learners is evaluated through school counselor reports and achievement data.

### **Increased Access at the Forefront**

Increasing access to advanced coursework is a cornerstone of the AIG program in UCPS. Screening processes are reviewed regularly to eliminate barriers and expand opportunities for students. Data analysis focuses on tracking representation trends and closing the excellence gap. Stakeholder committees include many members to inform decision-making.

### **The Revision Process: A Collaborative Effort**

The revision process is a structured and transparent process to support accountability at every step.

#### **1. Stakeholder Involvement:**

- The process is guided by a steering committee that includes representatives from district leadership and with intentional efforts to include multiple perspectives.
- Interviews, surveys, and focus groups are used to collect feedback, which is then reviewed for trends and insights.
- Parent advisory committee members and the revision team work closely to gather and analyze stakeholder input.
- The revision team does the work of reviewing practices that need improvement which includes reviewing draft district responses, considering stakeholder feedback, and providing suggestions for improvement. The representatives from this team include district leadership, staff from other departments, principals, teachers, parents, and additional community members to include many voices.

#### **2. Data-Driven Decision Making:**

- Feedback from stakeholders is paired with disaggregated data on student achievement, demographics, and program outcomes. This combination helps guide revisions that are responsive to community needs and address systemic challenges.
- Evidence-based best practices in gifted education guide decisions, helping keep programming both effective and forward-looking.

#### **3. Communication and Transparency:**

- Updates on the revision process are shared regularly with stakeholders through newsletters, meetings, and digital platforms.
- Drafts of the revised plan are shared with advisory groups and the broader community for feedback, building trust and providing opportunities for all voices to be heard.

#### **4. Approval and Submission:**

- Once revisions are finalized, the plan is reviewed by the UCPS Academics Department and approved by the UCPS Board of Education.
- Following approval, the plan is submitted to NCDPI and the State Board of Education for further review and feedback.

### **A Year in the Revision Process**

Spanning several months, the revision process allows for a comprehensive and thoughtful review of the AIG program and plan:

- **September to December:** The steering committee and advisory groups analyze initial feedback and data, focusing on standards identified as areas for improvement. Draft revisions are created for initial review.
- **January to March:** Revisions are refined through ongoing feedback from stakeholders, with targeted discussions on specific program standards. The steering committee, advisory groups, and revision team convene to continue the review process.
- **April to May:** Revisions are finalized, and the plan is reviewed by the UCPS Academics Department and approved by the UCPS Board of Education.
- **June to July:** The approved plan is submitted to NC DPI and the State Board of Education for review and feedback.

## Supporting Documents

To support a thorough and transparent process, the following documents guide the evaluation and revision of the AIG Local Plan:

- Stakeholder feedback surveys and analysis
- AIG Curriculum Framework
- Representation Index Data and Excellence Gap Analysis
- Screening Process and Identification Data
- Achievement and Growth Data
- Talent Development Data
- Honors Courses & Advanced Placement (AP) Course Enrollment Data
- Evidence-based best practices and program standards

Through this collaborative and data-driven process, UCPS works to align its AIG Local Plan with the district's commitment to excellence and continuous improvement. By incorporating stakeholder input and responding to the needs of gifted learners, the district remains focused on providing high-quality programming for all students.

### \* Practice B

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

The Union County Public Schools (UCPS) supports the implementation and fidelity of its local AIG plan through ongoing monitoring, oversight, and collaboration among district personnel and key stakeholders. The following outlines the district's efforts to monitor program implementation, the roles of personnel involved, and processes to align documented practices with on-the-ground implementation.

## District Monitoring Efforts

UCPS monitors the implementation of its AIG plan through:

- **Regular Feedback Collection:** Ongoing input is gathered from AIG Steering Committee members, principals, school-site AIG teams, instructional support staff, AIG Parent Advisory Council (PAC) members, and community stakeholders. Structured surveys, focus groups, PAC meetings, and stakeholder interviews are conducted to inform program improvement. For example, PAC members review screening and identification processes and recommend refinements.

- **Progress Reviews:** Implementation is assessed using monitoring tools, including reports from schools, annual reviews of Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs), and structured program evaluations. For example, school-level reports track DEP alignment with service delivery, while district-wide data is reviewed to identify trends and address gaps.
- **Stakeholder Reporting:** Updates on program progress are provided to stakeholders, including the PAC, district leadership, and the Board of Education. These updates include summaries of program achievements, challenges, and data-driven recommendations. Additionally, mid-cycle reviews of the AIG plan are conducted to align with shifts in local or state policies.

## Roles of District Personnel

### 1. AIG Director

- Provides strategic leadership and oversight for all aspects of the AIG program supporting compliance with legislation and policies.
- Communicates evidence-based best practices in gifted education and keeps stakeholders informed about emerging trends.
- Manages district-wide compliance, including the monitoring of testing, identification, and DEP implementation.
- Collaborates with principals to recruit and place qualified AIG staff supporting consistent service delivery across schools.
- Analyzes program data (e.g., identification rates, student outcomes, talent development efforts) to guide continuous improvement efforts. For example, the Director reviews identification data annually to monitor trends.

### 2. AIG Coordinators

- Supports the operational management of the AIG program by delivering professional development, managing testing programs, and analyzing program data.
- Evaluates the integrity of screening and identification procedures and recommends improvements based on data trends.
- Maintains accurate records, including DEP documentation and identification databases, to support compliance and inform decision-making.
- Facilitates collaboration through regular meetings with AIG staff, school principals, and instructional support personnel. For instance, monthly meetings focus on best practices in differentiation and enrichment.
- Leads professional learning for AIG stakeholders with an emphasis on differentiation, evidence-based practices, and strategies to support students whose advanced potential may not be reflected in conventional identification processes.

### 3. School Principals

- Complies with the local AIG plan at the school level by supporting DEP development, instructional differentiation, and teacher collaboration.
- Collaborates with the AIG Director on staffing and service delivery to meet the needs of gifted learners.
- Addresses parent and student concerns to advocate for appropriate services and support.
- Facilitates regular opportunities for AIG staff, instructional support staff, and general education teachers to collaborate on differentiation strategies.

### 4. School-Based AIG Teams

- Monitors the identification and placement of AIG students and reviews DEPs to confirm alignment with program goals.
- Communicates with parents, teachers, and stakeholders to provide updates on services and gather feedback.
- Evaluates enrichment opportunities and placement decisions in collaboration with district leadership. For instance, school teams assess the effectiveness of talent development initiatives during biannual meetings.

### 5. AIG Teachers

- Serves as the primary link between district and school leadership, parents, and students.
- Manages documentation, including DEPs, student records, and program compliance.
- Delivers direct instruction to gifted learners and mentor less-experienced AIG staff.

- Provides professional development to build capacity in differentiation and acceleration strategies. For instance, AIG teachers may facilitate workshops on curriculum compacting and inquiry-based learning for general education teachers.

## Supporting Fidelity to the Local AIG Plan

To support the consistent implementation of documented practices and policies, UCPS employs the following strategies:

- **Monitoring Tools and Processes:** UCPS has developed tools such as data notebooks, program evaluation checklists, and feedback reports to evaluate implementation at both district and school levels. For example, school-based AIG teams maintain data notebooks that document DEP implementation and service alignment, which are reviewed by district leadership.
- **Structured Review Meetings:** Regularly scheduled meetings (e.g., beginning, middle, and end of the year) focus on reviewing progress, analyzing data, and addressing implementation gaps. These meetings include district leaders, school-based AIG teams, and PAC members.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholders, including PAC members and the Board of Education, receive annual program updates. For example, program achievements, challenges, and demographic trends in identification are presented during a PAC meeting to solicit input and recommendations.
- **Mid-Cycle Revisions:** The district conducts mid-cycle reviews of the AIG plan to incorporate shifts in state policies or local priorities. These reviews help keep program practices relevant and responsive to the needs of gifted learners. For example, a recent mid-cycle review led to updates in the talent development process to broaden participation.
- **Capacity Building:** Professional development opportunities for AIG staff focus on leadership skills, advanced instructional strategies, and mentorship programs. For instance, AIG coordinators provide coaching cycles to support new staff in implementing the local AIG plan effectively.

Through these comprehensive efforts, UCPS supports the implementation of the AIG plan, while striving for continuous improvement.

### \* 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.

In collaboration with the Chief Finance Officer, the AIG Director develops and manages a strategic annual budget for state and local 034 funds, aligning expenditures with the goals of the Local AIG Plan and identifies students and stakeholder priorities. Input from key stakeholders, including AIG Coordinators, AIG Teachers, and district leadership, is solicited during the planning process to support a well-rounded approach to resource allocation.

The AIG budget is monitored regularly throughout the fiscal year by the AIG Director, the Assistant Superintendent of Academics and the Chief Financial Officer. Real-time accounting systems provided by the Finance Department enable the AIG Director to track expenditures and assess remaining funds. Regular reviews of 034 budget reports are conducted with the Finance Director and relevant team members to monitor alignment between expenditures, program goals, and state requirements. This systematic process allows for timely adjustments and supports fiscal accountability.

Expenditures are prioritized to support comprehensive implementation of the Local AIG Plan, including professional development, instructional materials, and program enhancements that directly benefit students. Personnel costs, including salaries and benefits for AIG-licensed staff, are verified collaboratively with Payroll and Licensure to support compliance with state funding policies.

To supplement state and local funds, the district actively seeks alternative funding sources such as grants, business partnerships, and federal funds. For example, funding was recently utilized to support advanced professional development opportunities for AIG teachers, enhancing their capacity to meet the needs of gifted learners.

Requests for the use of AIG funds are reviewed by the AIG Director to support alignment with program goals, compliance with state policy, and efficient use of resources. For instance, professional development opportunities are selected based on their ability to strengthen instructional practices and address identified program needs.

This collaborative and transparent process supports the strategic and effective use of the AIG budget to advance the goals of the Local AIG Plan while addressing the varied needs of students, educators, and other stakeholders.

**\* 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.

The AIG Director or designee annually collects, reviews, and analyzes state testing results in collaboration with the Director of Accountability and Research and the School Performance Directors. These findings are presented to the UCPS Cabinet and School Board annually and shared with the UCPS Academics Department. School Performance Directors disseminate the data to schools, where principals and school improvement teams incorporate the information into school improvement plans to address the needs of AIG students. This process allows for a timely data review—typically on a quarterly and annual basis, to identify emerging trends and inform school-level decision-making.

The AIG Director provides detailed reports and analyses of AIG student growth, achievement, and drop-out data to AIG stakeholders when appropriate. This includes collaboration with the Assistant Superintendent of Academics, the Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and the Directors of School Performance.

The academics division collaborates to collect and examine data that reflects the effectiveness of:

- Talent development services K-12
- Student enrollment and performance in Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), College and Career Promise (CCP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses in high school
- Drop-out and withdrawal rates for AIG students compared to same-aged peers
- Dual enrollment participation and early graduation rates

To support program effectiveness, the AIG Coordinator generates special reports that disaggregate student data by ethnicity, AIG status, and grade level. This data is compiled into spreadsheets to track trends over time. For example, a recent analysis revealed lower participation of Black and Hispanic students in AP courses, prompting targeted outreach and professional development for educators to review course placement practices and expand student awareness for advanced learning options. Findings such as these are shared with the UCPS Academics Department, school Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) teams, and relevant AIG stakeholders. Collaborative discussions within the UCPS Academics Department guide decisions related to curriculum, instruction, and support for advanced learners. Adjustments to services, such as expanding talent development efforts in schools, are made in response to emerging data trends.

Additionally, annual drop-out data for AIG students is reviewed to identify potential trends. The system includes monitoring early warning indicators, such as attendance patterns, declining grades, and behavioral data, on a quarterly basis. For students identified as at-risk, the AIG team collaborates with school counselors and MTSS teams to implement targeted interventions, such as mentorship programs and flexible scheduling options. Follow-up interviews with students who leave school provide insights into systemic issues, such as lack of engagement or access to advanced coursework, which inform future policies and practices.

Through continuous monitoring and analysis of data, UCPS informs mindsets, policies, and practices. For example, disaggregated data on AIG enrollment and achievement has informed adjustments in talent development services, including the expansion of advanced curriculum opportunities and the exploration of district wide talent development guidelines. Annual updates on the state of the AIG program, including data-informed recommendations, are provided to the district and school teams. These updates support ongoing program improvement and address both the academic and self-management skill development of AIG students.

**\* 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.

The AIG Director or designee collects and maintains comprehensive data to create reports on the referral, identification, services, and retention of students, with a specific focus on patterns and trends across student groups. This approach is designed to minimize the impact of students' demographic factors--including exceptionalities and language differences--on their likelihood of being identified for or participating in gifted education.

## **System for Maintaining Referral, Identification, Services, and Retention Data**

UCPS maintains detailed records on the referral, identification, and retention of AIG students using the following tools:

- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) headcount data
- District-level AIG screening and identification data
- Electronic records stored in the department database

Efforts are ongoing to optimize technology for better tracking and monitoring of student progress through the AIG program.

To further improve data progress monitoring, UCPS is exploring the implementation of a centralized data dashboard that allows real-time tracking and analysis of referral, identification, services, and retention trends. This would enable AIG coordinators, AIG teachers, and school teams to access up-to-date insights and respond more quickly to disparities.

## **System for Analyzing Referral, Identification, Services, and Retention Data**

UCPS uses a systematic approach to analyze data semi-annually, focusing on identifying and addressing disproportionality in access to gifted education. This process includes:

- Monitoring demographic representation across all schools and grade levels
- Analyzing referral, identification, and retention patterns to identify patterns among student groups
- Using reports to track participation and retention within the AIG program
- Partnering with schools that have less than 10% of their students identified as gifted

## **Initiatives to Reach a Range of Gifted Learners**

UCPS has implemented several evidence-based practices to expand participation in gifted education, including:

- **Talent Development Programs at Title I Schools:** Providing enrichment opportunities to identify and nurture high-potential students early.
- **Comprehensive Body of Evidence:** Using qualitative measures like portfolios, interviews, and rating scales for Pathway 3 to provide multiple avenues for gifted identification.
- **Universal Screeners:** Employing both local and national norms to identify students and establishing school-based talent development pools.
- **Professional Development:** Training staff to recognize indicators of giftedness across a broad range of student backgrounds and to strengthen referral, screening, and identification practices.
- **Wayfind Program:** Offering tuition-free college opportunities and mentorship for students who have faced barriers to higher education, with the goal of supporting their successful completion of a degree from Wingate University.

- **Early College Program:** Designed for students who are first generation college attendees, this program combines high school course load with college classes to provide a more supportive environment and enable students to earn an Associate's Degree from South Piedmont Community College.
- To strengthen family engagement, UCPS is exploring options for informational workshops and resources tailored to families who may be less familiar with the AIG process. These sessions will improve awareness, build trust, and empower families to advocate for their children's educational needs.

## Data-Driven Interventions and Retention Strategies

Retention data is collected and analyzed annually to monitor trends in participation in AIG. UCPS tracks additional indicators of student engagement, such as enrollment in advanced coursework (AP, IB, honors, dual enrollment), participation in mentorships or internships, and involvement in other advanced learning opportunities.

UCPS is developing individualized growth plans for students whose strengths may not be fully recognized through traditional gifted identification methods. These plans support student success through mentorship opportunities, regular progress monitoring, and self-management skill support.

## Collaborative Partnerships

UCPS works in partnership with MTSU teams and district personnel monitoring enrollment and performance trends to align efforts with AIG goals and exchange strategies for addressing broader systemic issues. These partnerships will expand to include shared data collection tools and analysis protocols, supporting a unified approach to identifying patterns and addressing factors that impact participation in gifted education.

## Consideration for Pathway 3

The following student groups are prioritized for consideration under Pathway 3 during the screening process:

- Students from military families or experiencing homelessness or foster care
- Students identified as Multilingual Learners (MLs), including those on monitoring status
- Students with limited financial resources
- Students with physical, sensory, learning, or processing disabilities as documented on Individual Education Plan (IEP)

This comprehensive and proactive approach allows UCPS to respond to enrollment patterns and promote student participation and success in gifted education.

\* **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.

The AIG Director actively participates in the hiring process for K-12 AIG personnel to support alignment with the strategic goals outlined in the Local AIG Plan. Prior to offering an applicant an AIG position, the principal consults with the AIG Director to verify the applicant's credentials or confirm their willingness to attain the necessary qualifications. A Personnel Verification Form (PVF) is submitted to the AIG Director to initiate a formal credential verification process.

The Licensure team collaborates with the AIG Director to confirm the teaching license of the applicant. If deficiencies are identified, the AIG Director and Human Resources (HR) develop a provisional certification plan that includes one of the following pathways to AIG licensure:

1. Completing required coursework at an approved college or university,

2. Participating in the AIG Academy, or
3. Successfully completing the Praxis exam.

For teachers hired with a provisional AIG license, the AIG Director requires submission of a profile sheet detailing their certification plan. This information is entered into a centralized database managed by HR and cross-checked annually to monitor progress and support compliance with licensure requirements. The database supports transparency and allows long-term tracking of credential data to inform decisions related to personnel placement, compliance, and professional growth.

The data collected from licensing and certification tracking is directly tied to the goals of the Local AIG Plan. This includes using the data to project funding needs, such as tuition or Praxis exam reimbursement, professional development expenses, and other budget implications. The AIG Director collaborates with Human Resources and payroll to align these resources with strategic goals, such as increasing the number of AIG-certified teachers and expanding access to highly qualified personnel for underserved populations, including Black and Hispanic students.

The AIG Director also works with school administrators to:

- Assess the needs of each school's AIG program
- Support placement of AIG students
- Make informed hiring decisions
- Align personnel decisions with the overall goals of the AIG program

To further align personnel qualifications with Local AIG Plan goals, UCPS is exploring additional strategies to increase the number of locally endorsed or licensed teachers. These efforts include targeted professional development opportunities, partnerships with higher education institutions, and incentive programs for earning AIG certification.

**\* 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.

Union County Public Schools (UCPS) values the perspectives of its stakeholders and strives to create a dynamic AIG program that continuously evolves to meet the needs of gifted learners. To achieve this, feedback from students, parents/guardians, families, teachers, and administrators is intentionally and regularly collected using a variety of methods to support consistency and strengthen implementation across the district.

One of the primary ways UCPS gathers feedback is through comprehensive stakeholder surveys. These surveys are designed to measure the effectiveness of the AIG program and provide insights into areas that may need revision or improvement. Administered annually—during program revision years—these surveys align with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) AIG Standards. Participants include administrators, AIG teachers, general education teachers, and the parents of UCPS students. The AIG Department conducts student focus groups to gather feedback from students. By engaging a broad group of stakeholders, UCPS incorporates a wide range of perspectives in shaping its program.

In addition to surveys, UCPS relies on two advisory committees to provide ongoing, in-depth feedback. The AIG Parent Advisory Council (PAC) consists of parents of AIG students who meet at least three times a year to share their perspectives and offer suggestions. Similarly, the AIG Teacher Advisory Council (TAC), composed of teachers who work with AIG students, meets to discuss program implementation and share insights from their daily experiences. These committees' function as focus groups, enabling the AIG Department to engage directly with key stakeholders in meaningful conversations.

Feedback is also gathered through established school and district structures, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) meetings, cross-department meetings, and principal meetings. These collaborative spaces allow teachers and administrators to share observations and recommendations about the AIG program. Cluster meetings and instructional walkthroughs offer structured opportunities for gathering classroom-level feedback, which is documented and used to promote consistency and alignment with the district's goals for service delivery.

Evaluation forms are another critical tool for collecting feedback. At every AIG-related meeting, participants are asked to complete evaluations focusing on topics such as evidence-based best practices, the academic and self-management needs of gifted learners, strategies for reaching a broad range of student groups, and program accountability. These evaluations help the district gather specific, actionable insights that guide decision-making.

Beyond formal mechanisms, UCPS recognizes the importance of informal feedback. Parent group meetings, emails, phone calls, curriculum nights, and open houses provide valuable opportunities for families and community members to share their thoughts and ask questions. These less structured settings often reveal unique perspectives that might not emerge in more formal contexts. By creating multiple avenues for engagement, the district provides opportunities for stakeholders to contribute their voices.

UCPS remains committed to continuous improvement within its AIG program. The district maintains open lines of communication with stakeholders through structured surveys, advisory and focus groups, collaborative meetings, evaluations, and informal dialogue. These efforts help the program remain responsive to the needs of its students while maintaining alignment with the district's vision for gifted education.

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

The district remains committed to the transparent communication of AIG program evaluation data, providing stakeholders with information that is clear, relevant, and responsive to their needs. Program evaluation data, including survey feedback, student achievement outcomes, and enrollment trends, is analyzed and disseminated annually to support program improvements and support collaboration.

To reach school personnel, the district organizes dedicated sessions during staff meetings and professional development opportunities, where administrators and teachers receive detailed reports highlighting program results and implications for instructional practices. These presentations are tailored to address specific school-level needs and priorities, supporting a sense of shared responsibility in advancing the goals of the AIG program.

District leadership and personnel in the academics division receive comprehensive data summaries during departmental meetings, where they engage in discussions about trends, access considerations, and potential program enhancements. These meetings support the alignment of the AIG program evaluation with broader district initiatives and goals.

Students play a vital role in the program evaluation process. The district shares age-appropriate summaries of key findings with student advisory groups and councils, encouraging their input and highlighting areas of success and opportunities for growth. By involving students in this dialogue, the district amplifies their voice and promotes ownership of their learning experiences.

Parents, guardians, and families are informed through a variety of accessible communication methods, such as short videos and infographics. These materials are published on the district's AIG department website and shared through emails and parent communication platforms. Additionally, family meetings and events, including PTA/PTSO gatherings and AIG-focused parent nights, provide opportunities for direct engagement and dialogue about program outcomes and next steps.

The broader community is engaged through partnerships with local organizations, public forums, and widely accessible reports published on district and school websites. Brochures, fact sheets, and district presentations are created to inform community stakeholders about program highlights.

In all communications, the district upholds the confidentiality of individuals who provide feedback and adheres to FERPA guidelines when sharing student-specific data. Program evaluation results are shared in ways that maintain transparency while respecting the privacy of all stakeholders.

By utilizing multiple methods of communication and tailoring messages to meet the needs of various audiences, the district helps keep all stakeholders informed, engaged, and equipped to support the continuous improvement of the AIG program.

**\* 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.

Students' rights are protected in multiple ways throughout the AIG program, with particular attention to documentation, informed consent, procedural transparency, and the ability to appeal decisions.

## Documentation and Transparency

The AIG program employs a structured process with clearly defined forms to support transparency and proper documentation for each student assessed. The forms include:

- **AIG 1:** Student Nomination Form
- **AIG 2:** Permission to Test Form
- **AIG 3, 3B:** Notification of Eligibility or Decision Forms
- **Testing Results Letter:** Notification of Screening Outcome Involving Additional Testing. Typically used in lieu of an AIG 1 and AIG 3 or AIG 3B.
- **AIG 4:** Differentiated Education Plans (DEP)

These documents not only track key stages of the process but also provide families with detailed information about their child's progress and eligibility. To promote accuracy and accountability, documentation is provided to parents/guardians in hard copy, maintained in school-based AIG folders, and archived in the district's AIG electronic database.

## Informed Consent

Informed consent is a cornerstone of protecting students' rights. Parents/guardians must provide written consent at two critical stages:

1. Before any further assessment is conducted (via AIG 2).
2. Before their child is formally placed into gifted services (via AIG 4).

This dual-consent process allows parents to maintain control over their child's participation in the program and provides opportunities to ask questions, voice concerns, or opt out if desired. Providing a Handbook of Parents' Rights and Responsibilities in Gifted Education helps families understand and navigate the identification and service process with confidence.

## Automatic Annual Screening and Transition-Based Continuation of Services

All students in grades 3-7 participate in an annual district-wide screening process each spring. Parents are notified in writing if their child is recommended for further evaluation, with opportunities for summer or fall testing.

Transition-based continuation of services (elementary to middle and middle to high school) requires updated parent consent through the signing of a new Differentiation Education Plan (DEP), as service models and delivery methods change across grade levels.

## Nomination for Gifted Services Procedure:

1. The student is screened and student data is added to the school's screening notebook.
2. Further recommendations are made based on the evaluation of the student data.
  - a. If a student is not referred for further evaluation, the process stops here.

- b. If student data meets the identification criteria, the student is formally identified. Skip down to step 6.
  - c. If a student is referred for further evaluation, they receive a referral for further evaluation to complete the screening process. Go to the next step.
3. An AIG 2 (permission to test form) is shared with parent/guardian for parent/guardian signature with a link to the Handbook of Parents' Rights & Responsibilities in Gifted Education. Hard copies are provided upon request and available in Spanish.
  4. The signed AIG 2 form is returned to the school.
  5. Testing is administered & scored.
  6. Any new data is added to the AIG 1 (student nomination form) and to the school's screening notebook.
  7. AIG team members evaluate AIG 1 (student nomination form) and sign it.
  8. The parents are notified of the outcome of the screening via a testing results letter.
    - a. If a student did not qualify for services, the process stops here.
    - b. If a student did qualify for services, go to the next step.
  9. The parents are invited to accept or decline services by signing an AIG 4 (Differentiated Education Plan).

### **Exiting Services Procedure**

If a parent requests that a student exits an area of service or the gifted program, the AIG Teacher or designee drafts a blank AIG 1 (student nomination form) and creates an AIG 3 (invitation to conference) to invite the parents to the school for a conference. The AIG Team or school designee and the parents meet to discuss concerns and the parents/guardians sign a DEP declining service in the appropriate area(s) on the AIG 4 (DEP). The updated DEP changes services for the student in question based on the parents/guardian's wishes.

The AIG Teacher or designee immediately alerts the AIG Coordinator by completing an AIG 7 (Withdrawal/Transfer/Exit Form). The updated AIG 4 and the AIG 7 are filed in the student AIG Folder at the school and all forms are archived in the AIG Database to maintain electronic records. The AIG teacher enters the reasons for the change(s) in service(s) into the electronic database and communicates with the school data manager to make changes in Infinite Campus. This process supports the accuracy of the AIG headcount, the hard copy student files at the school, and the AIG database.

### **Rescreening Procedures**

If a family wishes to exit services, a conference is held with the AIG Team or with school designee to document the decision and provide clarity regarding implications. Similarly, families may request a rescreening of student data if they disagree with eligibility outcomes, however, a student must meet the UCPS identification criteria to be identified as AIG. This process maintains consistency in identification procedures and supports clear communication with families.

### **Transfer Procedures**

For students transferring into UCPS, a consistent protocol is followed to screen incoming students against district criteria, providing opportunities for placement where appropriate. For those transferring out and later returning to UCPS, previous AIG identification is honored, maintaining continuity for students.

### **Appeals and Due Process**

If families believe a student has not been identified for gifted services despite meeting the identification criteria or did not receive services outlined on their Differentiated Education Plan (DEP), parents/guardians may follow the appeals process. This is a multi-step procedure that allows parents/guardians to escalate concerns from the school level to the district, and ultimately, to the state level if necessary.

### **STEP 1: School-Level Appeal**

**Who to Contact:** School AIG Team/Principal**What to Do:** Submit a written request explaining your concerns within 30 days of test results or the start of the school year.**What Happens Next:**

- The AIG Team will review student data and relevant documentation.
- A meeting will be scheduled within 10 business days after the receipt of written request
- You will receive a written response within 10 business days after the meeting.
- If unresolved, proceed to step 2.

**STEP 2: Department-Level Appeal****Who to Contact:** Director of College Readiness & AIG Services**What to Do:** Submit a written appeal within 10 business days of the school's decision.**What Happens Next:**

- The Director of College Readiness & AIG Services will review the case and may request additional information.
- A meeting will be scheduled within 10 business days after the receipt of written appeal
- You will receive a written response within 10 business days after the meeting.
- If unresolved, proceed to step 3.

**STEP 3: District-Level 1 Appeal****Who to Contact:** Assistant Superintendent of Academics**What to Do:** Submit a written appeal within 10 business days of the Director's decision.**What Happens Next:**

- The Assistant Superintendent of Academics will review the case and may request additional information.
- A meeting will be scheduled within 10 business days after the receipt of written appeal
- You will receive a written response within 10 business days after the meeting.
- If unresolved, proceed to step 4.

**STEP 4: District-Level 2 Appeal****Who to Contact:** Superintendent**What to Do:** Submit a written appeal within 10 business days of the Assistant Superintendent of Academics' decision.**What Happens Next:**

- The Superintendent will review the case and may request additional information.
- A meeting will be scheduled within 10 business days after the receipt of written appeal

- You will receive a written response within 10 business days after the meeting.
- If unresolved, proceed to step 5.

#### STEP 5: State-Level Appeal

**Who to Contact:** North Carolina Office of Administrative Hearings

**What to Do:** File a petition for a contested case hearing under North Carolina law.

#### Reviewable Issues:

- Was the student improperly denied AIG identification?
- Were services not provided as outlined in the Differentiated Education Plan (DEP)?

For more information about the state grievance process, visit the NC Department of Public Instruction's website or contact the State Superintendent's office.

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#### \* Ideas for Strengthening the Standard

- Evaluate Data to Improve Program Services & Sharing Information
- Collect Feedback from Stakeholders
- Improve Monitoring of Plan Implementation
- Exploring Options to Measure the Impact of Interventions

#### Planned Sources of Evidence

* Automatically Collected Student Data	
* Meeting Agendas, Notes & Feedback Forms	
* Policies & Procedures Review Documents	
* Survey Data & Feedback Loops	
* Walkthroughs & Case Reviews	

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 6 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#"><u>Parent Handbook</u></a>

**Union County Public Schools (900) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0**

\* Approved by local Board of Education on:

05/06/2025 

AIG Related Documents		
<b>Union County Public Schools (900) Regular Local School District - FY 2025 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2025-2028 - Rev 0</b>		
Type	Required Documents Document Template	Document/Link
Local Board of Education Approval Signatures [Upload at least 1 document(s)]	 <a href="#">Local Board of Education Approval Template</a>	 <a href="#">Signatures for AIG Plan Approval</a>
Type	Optional Documents Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 1 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#">UCPS AIG Identification Criteria (English)</a>  <a href="#">UCPS AIG Identification Criteria (Spanish)</a>  <a href="#">Pathway 3 Consideration Form</a>  <a href="#">Early Entrance to Kindergarten Process &amp; Application</a>  <a href="#">Acceleration Options &amp; Procedures</a>  <a href="#">AIG Screening &amp; Referral Form</a>
AIG Standard 2 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#">Advanced Learners, TD &amp; Gifted Services Plan</a>
AIG Standard 3 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#">AIG Curriculum Framework &amp; Objectives</a>
AIG Standard 4 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#">AIG PD Framework</a>  <a href="#">AIG Glossary</a>
AIG Standard 5 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#">Acknowledgements of Committee Members</a>
AIG Standard 6 Additional Resources	N/A	 <a href="#">Parent Handbook</a>

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Phrase	Definition