

North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards

State Board of Education Policy ACIG-000 – June 2018

Historical Overview of Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) in NC

North Carolina has had legislation governing gifted education since 1961, exemplifying the state's strong commitment to gifted education for over fifty years. In 1974, legislation identified gifted and handicapped children as children with special needs. In 1977, Chapter 927 in the NC Session Laws brought into compliance a system of educational opportunities for all children requiring special education. In 1983, Chapter 247 in the NC Session Laws revised the program title to "Academically Gifted" to emphasize North Carolina's commitment to academic programs and legislated that a student's gifted education program may be described with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a Group Education Plan (GEP). In 1993, Chapter 321, Section 134(c) in NC Session Laws, required that the State Board of Education "reexamine the State's laws, rules, and policies concerning the education of academically gifted children." As a result, new legislation for gifted education was passed in 1996, resulting in *Article 9B, Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students* [N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5-8 (Article 9B)]. Article 9B provides a state definition for Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students and requires local education agencies (LEA) to develop three year AIG local plans with specific components, to be approved by local school boards and subsequently sent to the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for review and comment. Article 9B is the current legislation mandating identification and services for gifted education K-12.

State Definition of AIG Students, Article 9B (N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5)

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

Rationale for the AIG Program Standards

"The General Assembly believes that public schools should challenge all students to aim for academic excellence" (Article 9B). The State Board of Education's (SBE) vision is that "Every public school student, through access to needed resources and rigor, will graduate ready for post-secondary education and work, prepared to be a globally engaged and productive citizen." Therefore, quality and comprehensive AIG programs are essential in supporting these goals and the needs of gifted learners across North Carolina.

In January 2008, the North Carolina AIG program, under the auspices of the Exceptional Children Division of DPI, received a performance audit through the Office of the State Auditor. The audit was initiated in response to parent/family concerns that state allocated AIG budget funds were being used for purposes other than AIG programming, while AIG students were left underserved. One of the recommendations of the audit was to develop state performance standards for local AIG programs in order to provide a statewide vehicle for monitoring program implementation, to support quality and effective local AIG programs, and to safeguard the rights of AIG students.

The structure that holds gifted programs together is nested in the policies, statutes, and guidelines that states have enacted (Brown, Avery, VanTassel-Baska, Worley & Stambaugh, 2006). Local gifted programs, and subsequently the growth of gifted learners, are heavily influenced by the strength of the initiatives emanating from the state level. Moreover, in the absence of federal legislation, state policies and legislation are the cornerstone of gifted programming.

AIG programs in North Carolina are embedded within and responsive to the local context of an LEA and, as a result, give rise to differences among programs across the state. Therefore, the AIG Program Standards are critical in providing a statewide framework for quality programming, while still honoring local flexibility. In an effort to strengthen gifted education in North Carolina, these AIG Program Standards represent the SBE's and DPI's commitment to ensure that the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students are being met.

Since the SBE approved the AIG Program Standards in 2009, these standards have served the purpose of guiding local AIG plan development. In each of the years preceding the submission of a new three year Local AIG plan, the NC AIG Program Standards are carefully reviewed to determine if revisions are necessary to further support the development of high quality gifted programs. The revision process assures that the program standards provide clear direction and support for the comprehensive nature of an effective local AIG plan and program for serving gifted learners in North Carolina's public schools.

Foundations of the AIG Program Standards

The AIG Program Standards are based on the following principles*:

Gifted learners form a diverse group of students with a variety of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs different than those of other children of their age, experience, and environment; therefore, they require appropriate identification and a range of service options within a comprehensive program.



Gifted learners possess the ability to think with more complexity and abstraction and learn at faster rates; therefore, they require challenging, differentiated curriculum and instruction which are developmentally appropriate and will prepare them for the future.

Gifted learners have different learning needs; therefore, they require time with others who are similar to themselves in order to establish cognitive relationships and to facilitate their academic, intellectual, social, and emotional growth.

Gifted learners have unique social and emotional needs; therefore, they require access to appropriate support systems and counseling to assure their affective well-being.

Gifted learners have needs different than others of their age, experience or environment; therefore, they require teachers and other personnel involved in their education who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and understandings to meet those needs.

Gifted learners, including those children with limited educational opportunities, are shaped by their early education experiences which form future learning habits; therefore, they need access to an appropriately challenging and engaging education early in their schooling to ensure that their potential is developed and optimized.

Gifted learners from under-represented populations are often overlooked in gifted programming; therefore, they require purposeful and intentional support to ensure that their potential is recognized, developed, and served. Gifted learners who are often left underserved include students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

When an appropriately differentiated education is not provided, gifted learners do not thrive in school, their potential is diminished, and they may even suffer from cognitive and affective harm; therefore, gifted learners must have their needs addressed in order to become capable, valuable, effective, and successful contributors to our global society.

Providing equity and excellence for all students in North Carolina is a priority; therefore, it is critical to meet the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners in an overall educational program.

** Adapted with permission of the authors. Coleman, M. R. & Gallagher, J.J. (1995). *Appropriate Differentiated Services: Guides for best practices in the education of gifted children. Gifted Child Today*, 18(5), 32-33.*

Purposes of the AIG Program Standards

Programs for the gifted differ in response to local needs and resources, but successful program design takes into account a common set of components. According to Reis (2006), a cohesive, thoughtful, and comprehensive gifted program design serves three major functions. First, it communicates which students' needs will be met and how. Second, it communicates a plan for implementation and coordination among the design components. Third, it provides a framework for decision-making and continuous program improvement.

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

These AIG Program Standards will:

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

Organization of the AIG Program Standards

Each standard is formatted as follows:

Standard: The standard is a defining statement articulating the expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs and relates to the categories addressed in Article 9B.

Practices: The practices clarify the standard, describe what an LEA should have in place, and guide LEAs to improve their programs. These practices will be verified to stakeholders through a variety of sources of evidence.

Standard 1: Student Identification

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

Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

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

Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

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

Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

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

Standard 5: Partnerships

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

Standard 6: Program Accountability

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



Standard 1: Student Identification

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

PRACTICES

- a) Develops screening and referral processes that lead to AIG identification at all grade levels.
- b) Establishes a process and criteria for AIG student identification at all grade levels 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.
- 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, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.
- d) Implements screening, referral, and identification processes consistently within the LEA.
- e) Disseminates information regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes to school personnel, parents/ families, students, and the community-at-large.
- f) Documents a student's AIG identification process and evidence which leads to an identification decision. This documentation is reviewed with parents/families and maintained in student records.

Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

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

PRACTICES

- a) Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the needs of gifted learners across all grade levels and learning environments. These services are aligned to a student's AIG identification.
- b) Integrates and connects AIG services with the total instructional program and resources of the LEA in policy and practice.
- c) Develops procedures for intentional, flexible grouping practices to facilitate the achievement and growth of AIG and other students with advanced learning needs.
- d) Informs all teachers, school administrators, and support staff about delivery of differentiated services and instruction for AIG students, regulations related to gifted education, and the local AIG program and plan.
- e) Communicates among and between teachers and schools to ensure an effective continuation of K-12 services, especially at key transition points.
- f) Addresses the social and emotional needs of AIG students through collaboration among school counseling personnel, regular education teachers, AIG specialists, and others.
- g) Develops policies and procedures for a variety of acceleration opportunities, including compacted content, Credit by Demonstrated Mastery, subject and/or grade acceleration.
- h) Implements intentional strategies to broaden access to advanced learning opportunities for under-represented AIG populations, including culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional. These strategies may include talent development efforts.
- i) Encourages extra-curricular programs and events that enhance and further develop the needs and interests of AIG students.

Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

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

PRACTICES

- 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 through the use of differentiation strategies, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration.
- b) Employs diverse and effective instructional practices according to students' identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles to address a range of learning needs at all grade levels.
- c) Incorporates a variety of evidence-based resources that enhance student learning.
- d) Fosters the development of future-ready skills including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and leadership.
- e) Uses on-going assessment, both formative and summative, to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction and inform flexible grouping practices.
- f) Addresses the social and emotional needs of AIG students through affective curricular and instructional practices.
- g) Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students through purposeful and intentional differentiated curriculum and instruction.
- h) Develops and implements differentiated curriculum and instruction through collaboration among regular education teachers, AIG personnel, and other related instructional staff.
- i) Develops and documents a student plan that articulates the differentiated curriculum and instruction services that match the identified needs of the K-12 AIG student, such as a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). This document is reviewed annually with parents/families to ensure effective programming, provide a continuum of services, and support school transitions.

Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

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

PRACTICES

- a) Employs an AIG-licensed educator as lead coordinator to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program and plan.
- b) Engages AIG-licensed specialists in tasks that explicitly address the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.
- c) Establishes specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, special education teachers, counselors, and school administrators.
- d) Provides general education services by personnel who have earned an AIG add-on license or have met the LEA requirements for that position.
- e) Aligns professional development opportunities with local AIG program goals, other district initiatives, and best practices in gifted education.
- f) Provides opportunities for AIG specialists and other teachers to plan, implement, and refine applications of their professional development learning.



Standard 5: Partnerships

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

PRACTICES

- a) Develops partnerships with parents/families that are intentional and meaningful to support the following needs of AIG students:
 - academic and intellectual
 - social and emotional.
- b) Shares with stakeholders, including all students' parents/families, information regarding the local AIG program, the local AIG plan, and other policies relating to gifted education.
- c) Establishes and utilizes an advisory group to develop, implement, and monitor the local AIG program and plan. This advisory group is representative of the diverse populations of the district and is at least comprised of community members, AIG parents and families, AIG teachers, and other instructional and support staff.
- d) Informs parents/families and the community of opportunities available to AIG students on an ongoing basis and in their native language.
- e) Partners with community stakeholders, such as institutions of higher education, local business and industry partners, and others to enhance and gain support for AIG programs and services.



Standard 6: Program Accountability

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

PRACTICES

- 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]), which has been approved by the local board of education and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.
- 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.
- 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.
- d) Maintains, analyzes, and shares student achievement, student growth, and annual drop-out data for AIG students.
- e) Monitors the representation, performance, and retention of under-represented populations in the local AIG program, including students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.
- f) Maintains current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving AIG students.
- g) Elicits regular feedback from students, parents/families, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the local AIG program.
- h) Utilizes multiple sources of data to review and revise the local AIG program and plan during comprehensive program evaluation.
- i) Disseminates all data from evaluation of the local AIG program to the public.
- j) Safeguards the rights of all AIG students and their parents and families 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.

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References

- Brown, E., Avery, L., VanTassel-Baska, J., Worley, B. & Stambaugh, T. (2006). A five-state analysis of gifted education policies, *Roeper Review*, 29(1), 11-23.
- Coleman, M. R. & Gallagher, J. J. (1995). Appropriate Differentiated Services: Guides for best practices in the education of gifted children. *Gifted Child Today*, 18(5), 32-33.
- North Carolina General Statutes, Article 9B, § 115C-150.5-8. *Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students*, 1996.
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