

NC AIG PROGRAM STANDARDS

Resource Guide

Standard 1: Student Identification



Fall 2018

Developed collaboratively with NC AIG Coordinators from across the state and the
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE OF THE IDENTIFICATION RESOURCE GUIDE

In 1996, legislation for gifted education was passed in our state – Article 9B, Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students [N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5-.8 (Article 9B)]. While Article 9B provides a state definition of giftedness, there is not a uniform set of criteria for local districts to use in identifying gifted students. Instead, across the state, we are able to honor local flexibility and control as we strive to develop identification criteria which are responsive to the Local Education Agency demographics, including the under-represented populations of gifted in the local context.

To that end, during the 2014-15 school year, AIG Coordinators across the state engaged in a series of “Identification Think Tank” sessions. Those sessions examined the issues and concerns that coordinators face in trying to develop and implement local policies in the area of student identification. As a means of tying together the research and lessons learned over the course of this experience, and to support school districts in the development of local criteria, leaders from across the state have come together with the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) staff to produce a guide to help clarify identification criteria, elaborate on best practices in assessing students, and better understand decision making around the identification of children in gifted programs. The staff at NCDPI would like to thank those district coordinators who rendered their support and expertise in the development of this Identification Resource Guide. This guide has been revised to reflect changes in the NC AIG Program Standards (revised and adopted in June 2018).

While there is no “magic bullet” or single “right way” to identify gifted students, this guide has been developed to support the following:

- Guidance for district coordinators and teams in thinking deeply about how to effectively identify gifted learners.
- Sharing and implementation of research-based best practices regarding identification across the state.
- Better understanding of the processes and thinking that lead to the ultimate goal of identification: to recognize potential and respond appropriately to ensure the optimal growth and development of the child.

Following the charge set forth in the legislation that guides gifted programming (Article 9B), this guide is broken into three sections:

- Resource and Policy Development
- Pre-identification processes: Screening and Referral
- Identification practices

Each section contains a review of best practices, an overview of critical vocabulary or policy needed to better understand the process, and reflection questions to support districts in assessing current practices and considering new ideas.

RESOURCE & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This section of the Identification Resource Guide houses the major resources that directly impact a district's development of effective identification policy. The goal for districts is to examine each of the resources in this section and then respond to the accompanying reflection questions. The reflection questions are designed for districts to use when assessing their current practices around, developing effective policy in, and making plans to move forward with "best practices" in the area of gifted identification. The resources reviewed in this section are as follows:

- Article 9B: The North Carolina definition of giftedness, the State Board of Education responsibilities, Local plans, and Review of Disagreements.
- Standard 1 – Student identification (from the NC AIG Program Standards)

Unpacking of the Legislation – [N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5-.8 (Article 9B)]

The following represents NCDPI's guidance regarding legislative requirements.

Part A: N.C.G.S. § 115C – 150.5. Academically or Intellectually Gifted students.

Legislative Language:

The General Assembly believes the public schools should challenge all students to aim for academic excellence and that academically or intellectually gifted (AIG) students perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experiences 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.

Unpacking the Legislation:

What are the various components of the state definition to be particularly mindful of?

- Public schools should challenge ALL students to aim for academic excellence
 - Introductory statement within the legislation provides a challenge for all LEAs
- AIG students **perform**
 - Perform = shows high achievement in academic pursuits
- AIG students **show the potential** to perform
 - Potential = latent ability; existing but not yet developed or actualized, existing as potential, student has the possibility to perform
- AIG students exhibit **substantially high levels of accomplishment**
 - Substantially high level of accomplishment = quantitative and/or qualitative measure(s) that represent above average achievement

- When compared with others of **their age, experience, or environment**
 - Highlights attention to the critical nature and unique context of the local learning environment
- Students exhibit high performance capability in **intellectual areas, specific academic fields or both**
 - recognize that giftedness can manifest itself in EITHER area OR both areas; it is not required to be an “AND” instead can be an either/or
 - intellectual areas = cognitive processing and reasoning abilities in scholarly areas of study outside of the regular academic programming of schools
 - specific academic fields = those within the regular academic programming
 - or both = can be academic fields AND intellectual areas
- Require **differentiated educational services** beyond those **ordinarily provided by the regular educational program**.
 - differentiated educational services = something that is “different” than the standard educational services provided to the student
 - differentiation can happen by changing the content, process, or product
 - differentiation can happen through acceleration, enrichment, and extension
 - assessment data is utilized to make differentiation decisions
 - ordinarily provided by the regular educational program = the taught curriculum, as defined by the local district, or the way in which the district approaches or implements the standard course of study
- Abilities present in students from **all cultural groups, economic strata, and areas of human endeavor**
 - cultural groups = various groups of people distinguish one from another by the sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs related to culture
 - economic strata = how social classes are stratified, along economic lines
 - human endeavor = all things that humans (students) attempt to do

Reflection questions for districts to consider:

How can districts keep these ideas at the forefront of the discussion when developing identification policy and recommending changes to identification practice and policy?

- Read the policy and/or the definition frequently as the standard is revised to realize the ideals of the legislation.
- Make the legislation available to district Advisory Board and other stakeholders.
- Make vocabulary consistent throughout the plan revision to ensure common understanding of all components of identification process.
- Examine how different parts of the definition would impact the district’s identification criteria and programming.

Part B: N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.6. State Board of Education responsibilities.

Legislative Language:

In order to implement this Article, the State Board of Education shall:

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

(2) Provide ongoing technical assistance to the local school administrative units in the development, implementation, and evaluation of their local plans under G.S. 115C-150.7. (1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 18.24(f).)

Unpacking the legislation:

In reviewing the State Board of Education responsibilities, districts can be assured that NCDPI will:

- Develop guidelines for developing local plans, through the use of the NC AIG Program Standards.
- Continue to clarify the NC AIG Program Standards and develop resources to support understanding of the standards and develop local plans.
- Provide professional opportunities, including technical assistance in a variety of ways to support districts in the development, monitoring, and evaluation of local plans.

Reflection questions for districts to consider:

As districts consider carefully the implementation and evaluation of local AIG plans, what types of support are needed to complete these processes?

What resources or support materials would be helpful to aide in the understanding of the NC AIG Program Standards and local AIG plan development process?

What will district personnel share with the NCDPI staff about the types of technical assistance support needed to support local plan efforts?

Part C: N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.7. Local Plans.

Legislative Language:

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

(b) Each plan shall include the following components:

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

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

(3) Measurable objectives for the various services that align with core curriculum and a method to evaluate the plan and the services offered. The evaluation shall focus on improved student performance.

(4) Professional development clearly matched to the goals and objectives of the plan, the needs of the staff providing services to academically or intellectually gifted students, the services offered, and the curricular modifications.

(5) A plan to involve the school community, parents, and representatives of the local community in the ongoing implementation of the local plan, monitoring of the local plan, and integration of educational services for academically or intellectually gifted students into the total school program. This should include a public information component.

(6) The name and role description of the person responsible for implementation of the plan.

(7) A procedure to resolve disagreements between parents or guardians and the local school administrative unit when a child is not identified as an academically or intellectually gifted student or concerning the appropriateness of services offered to the academically or intellectually gifted student.

(8) Any other information the local board considers necessary or appropriate to implement this Article or to improve the educational performance of academically or intellectually gifted students.

(c) Upon its approval of the plan developed under this section, the local board shall submit the plan to the State Board of Education for its review and comments. The local board shall consider the comments it receives from the State Board before it implements the plan.

(d) A plan shall remain in effect for no more than three years; however, the local board may amend the plan as often as it considers necessary or appropriate. Any changes to a plan shall be submitted to the State Board of Education for its review and comments. The local board shall consider the State Board's comments before it implements the changes. (1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 18.24(f).)

Unpacking the legislation:

In keeping with the legislative requirements set forth, districts must then determine how the following tasks will be accomplished:

- Work together with parents, the school community, representatives of the community, and others to develop a local plan. (a)
- Develop screening, referral, and placement procedures that allow for the identification of AIG students and assignment of these students to appropriate services. (b1)
- Outline efforts to develop services and settings to meet the diversity of identified AIG students. (b2)
- Define the measures of success for and then evaluate the local AIG plan and services offered; keeping the performance of students in mind. (b3)
- Provide professional development regarding identification, services offered, and curricular modifications to meet the needs of staff serving AIG students and meet the objectives of the local AIG plan. (b4)
- Involve the stakeholders in implementing and then monitoring the effectiveness of the local AIG plan. (b5)
- Appoint a person responsible for implementation of the plan and provide a job description for this individual. (b6)
- Develop a grievance process. (b7)
- Attend to the needs of the local unit to fully implement Article 9B and to improve the educational performance of AIG students. (b8)
- Ensure timely review process is followed for Local Board of Education approval. (c)
- Develop process for reviewing the State Board of Education (SBE)/ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) comments and feedback before implementing new plan. (c)
- Ensure that if changes are made to the plan once submitted to SBE/NCDPI, the changes are approved by the Local Board of Education (LBE) and re-submitted to the State Board of Education/ NC Department of Public Instruction for feedback and the LBE considers the feedback before implementing the new changes. (d)

Reflection questions for districts to consider:

1. When considering the components of Article 9B, what areas of strength emerge for the district?
2. In contrast, what areas need the most targeted attention and how will the district address these needs?
3. How will the district provide professional development that is targeted and meaningful and will lead towards student identification that is more representative of the diversity found in the district?
4. How will the district define measures of success to evaluate the local plan?
5. What mechanism or structure is in place to ensure the LBE receives and reviews the plan feedback from SBE/NCDPI?

Part D: N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.8. Review of Disagreements.

Legislative Language:

In the event that the procedure developed under G.S. 115C-150.7(b7) fails to resolve a disagreement, the parent or guardian may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. The scope of review shall be limited to (i) whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an academically or intellectually gifted student, or (ii) whether the local plan developed under G.S. 115C-150.7 has been implemented appropriately with regard to the child. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusions of law. Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decision of the administrative law judge becomes final, is binding on the parties, and is not subject to further review under Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. (1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 18.24(f).)

Unpacking the Legislation:

The legislation here outlines a procedure for resolving disagreements when the family chooses to follow this route and local policy is not successful. Critical to this procedure is an examination of the following:

- How did the local district improperly fail to identify the student as gifted? (i)
- How did the local unit appropriately implement the local plan with regards to the individual child in question? (ii)

Reflection questions for districts to consider:

1. How is the policy designed to focus that the needs of the students are the primary consideration in the process and that those needs are met?
2. How does the district inform parents about the grievance procedures? Of parent rights?
3. How does the district periodically cross reference student identification and service delivery data to monitor the following:
 - a. Consistency in identification practices across the district is aligned with the identification policy in the plan?
 - b. There is a healthy match between the demonstrated needs of the student with the services provided to him or her?
4. When the Review of Disagreements policy for the district does not resolve the disagreement, how are all stakeholders advised about potential next steps and prepared for the process?
5. How does the district continue to evaluate the question of improperly failing to identify a student as gifted?
6. How does the district ensure that the local plan is followed when considering a case in question?

Close Review of Standard 1 (Student identification)

The North Carolina AIG Program Standards (State Board of Education Policy ACIG-000) provide a statewide framework for quality and comprehensive AIG programs and services, while honoring local context and flexibility. In addition, the NC AIG Program Standards serve as a vehicle for conveying expectations and articulating best practices for local AIG programs. The NC AIG Program Standards are further utilized to guide the development, revision, and monitoring of local AIG programs. Therefore, effective identification policy development also includes a review of the expectations and goals found within Standard One.

The practice components to address below, taken from the unpacking documents, clearly explain what is expected to be covered in the plan by each of the practices within the standard, and the strategies for implementation are examples of best practices and strategies currently in use by districts across the state.

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

Reflection Questions:

- What is the goal of the screening and referral process? How will qualitative and quantitative data be collected and used in the screening, referral, and identification processes?
- How will the district examine identification criteria to ensure it is fair and equitable for all student populations?
- How will the district utilize the data/body of evidence/comprehensive learner profile to best understand a child's abilities and potential in making an identification decision?
- How does the district intentionally communicate and educate students and families from every sub-group as well as faculty and staff to ensure understanding of the identification criteria and process?

a) Develops screening and referral processes that lead to AIG identification at all grade levels.

Practice Components to Address:

Outline the steps involved in K-12 screening and referral processes that lead to identification. Distinguish between screening and referral processes.

Strategies for Implementation:

- Develop processes that are clear, with common vocabulary defined.
- Determine rationale and goals for the screening and referral processes.
- Decide which qualitative and quantitative data will be collected, in order to build a comprehensive learner profile.
- Use off-grade level assessments.
- Use nationally normed assessments.
- Use typical as well as atypical standardized evidence, such as behavior checklists, interviews, observation tools and portfolios to build a body of evidence.

b) Establishes a process and criteria for AIG student identification at all grade levels and 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.

Practice Components to Address:

Outline the steps involved in the identification process at each grade level.

Explain in the body of the plan the criteria used to identify students as:

- a) Academically Gifted (AG)
- b) Intellectually Gifted (IG)
- c) Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI)
- d) Academically Gifted in Math and/or Reading (AM, AR)

Strategies for Implementation:

- Review qualitative and quantitative evidence that includes a student’s achievement, aptitude, and potential to achieve.
- Analyze multiple data points to determine if a student’s comprehensive learner profile shows a need beyond the regular education program.
- Develop multiple pathways for student identification, explaining the criteria for each, based on the district’s definition of various categories of giftedness.
- Develop identification criteria in consideration of best practices in gifted, including:
 - No one criterion should exclude a child from AIG identification.
 - Any single criterion, if superior, may indicate a need for gifted identification and services.
 - Focus on multiple ways to see a child’s strengths versus multiple hoops or barriers for identification.
 - DPI strongly **discourages the practice of “de-gifting”** children
- Address the identification of students across the K-12 continuum. Even if there is no mass identification process for grades K-2 and/or 9-12, ensure that there is a means for identification at these grade spans when the body of evidence indicates a need.

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.

Practice Components to Address:

Describe LEA demographics and identify those under-represented populations present in the district. Clearly state how the screening, referral, and identification procedures in the LEA intentionally respond to its demographics.

Strategies for Implementation:

- Monitor and analyze sub-group data to understand LEA demographics.
- Analyze data for each sub-group to determine in which subgroups underrepresentation is present and use this information to develop or enhance screening, referral, and identification procedures.
- Review available district and statewide assessment data to ensure equitable access to AIG identification and programming.

- Provide multiple pathways for identification; however, do not create an alternate pathway that is designated for use with only specific student populations.
- Partner with EC, ELL, Title 1, and other groups to provide opportunities for students to show their strengths that may lead to identification.
- Provide professional development to expand understanding of giftedness and address misperceptions about various sub-groups.
- Develop a process for intentional screening and follow up with students who have participated in the district's focused K-3 programming.
- Utilize local norms (both school and district data) to respond to the local context.
- Incorporate an additional opportunity for students to show their strengths, demonstrating a need for service by performing above grade level peers within the context of the students' learning environment.

d) Implements screening, referral, and identification processes consistently within the LEA.

Practice Components to Address:

Describe systems developed to support consistent implementation of all screening, referral and identification processes in the LEA.

Strategies for Implementation:

- Provide resources for schools to identify students (forms, flowcharts, checklists, etc.) following the guidelines developed.
- Provide professional development for all school level committees/teams on screening, referral, and identification procedures to ensure consistent implementation across the district.
- Attend district principals'/leadership meetings (AIG Coordinator or Lead Specialist) to share AIG identification information.
- Create a procedure for maintaining documentation for all students in the AIG process, including those who are referred but not identified.
- Develop a plan to monitor the district's clear and comprehensive guidelines for screening, referral, and identification procedures.
- Develop a process for internal auditing of AIG school records to ensure screening, referral, and identification processes are implemented consistently across the district.

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

Practice Components to Address:

- Outline the communication plan regarding AIG student screening, referral, and identification for the district K-12.
- Share process with all stakeholders in a variety of modes/formats.

Strategies for Implementation:

Make procedures available in different media formats (including electronic, written, and verbal means) utilizing technology where appropriate and applicable.

- Share process on home call alert systems.
- Host open interest meetings at district and school levels K-12.

- Advertise procedures in various public settings, including community locations.
- Create brochures, quick reference guides, and FAQs for parents/community. Consider including quotes from current AIG students about the impact of AIG services in the brochure.
- Illustrate the processes in forms other than narrative- consider graphic organizers, flow charts, and bulleted lists.

Integrate distribution of program and placement information for stakeholder groups throughout the year at events such as Kindergarten registration, open houses, and/or in conjunction with other school and district wide informational nights. Also distribute information with existing transition to the district/new family packets and in new student registration materials.

Develop and utilize a “standardized presentation” or video (i.e., Power Point, Prezi, other presentation format) outlining the screening, referral, and identification processes EACH year to teachers and other stakeholders across the district.

- Post presentation on the school and/or district website.
- Tailor the presentation to meet the needs of various audiences.

Work with interpreter during ELL Parent Meetings and/or other established parent gatherings or meetings to distribute materials regarding AIG (in the students’ native language).

Translate ALL written materials, into students’ native language (based on community needs).

Produce an AIG Newsletter that details current information for teachers and parents, including a permanent text box that describes screening, referral, and identification practices.

Write an article for the school or district wide newsletter that describes screening and identification procedures for AIG.

Conduct parent and community training – ongoing and substantial - focused on providing training and development to understand the screening, referral, and identification processes.

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.

Practice Components to Address:

Create an individual AIG file for each student which contains all documentation which has led to identification.

Share the process by which documentation is reviewed with parents and maintained for students.

Strategies for Implementation:

- Document all critical aspects of the district’s identification process.
- Develop a paper or electronic file to maintain an individual student’s AIG documentation at a school site and/or central location. Alternatively, utilize features in PowerSchool to document identification evidence for students.
- Provide families/parents with copies of all documentation and meet for initial review. Include signatures of all associated parties.
- Follow LEA rules for developing local procedures and practices around maintaining documentation.

Reflection questions for districts to consider:

1. How is the identification process communicated with stakeholders?
2. As a district, think deeply about the ultimate goal in considering identification criteria:
 - a. Why identify students?
 - b. Who is the district looking for and/or want to serve?
 - c. Does the current criteria indicate that the district is looking only for the “perfect child?”
 - d. Does a review of local data indicate that the identification criteria meet the needs of advanced learners?
 - e. Is there a process in place for evaluating the current identification criteria?
3. How does the district ensure that students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, ELL’s, highly gifted and/or 2E have equitable opportunities to be recognized as gifted?
4. How does the plan allow for the identification of students at multiple points along the K-12 continuum consistently across the district?
5. How does the district recommend or consider identifying students for talent development programming?
6. Are there students who were missed using the district’s identification model?
 - a. What data is reviewed to determine which students are missing from programming?
 - b. What are the reflective practices in place to determine why the students are missed?
7. What professional development is in place for stakeholders involved in the identification process?
8. In what ways will the district serve the identified students?
9. How does the district articulate the ways in which services offered match the identification criteria?
10. How does the district document the identification process and services provided to students?

SCREENING + REFERRAL = PRE-IDENTIFICATION

This section of the guide will examine questions that refer specifically to the screening and referral processes. The goal for districts will be to consider the guidance in each of the following areas and then respond to the reflection questions at the end of the section.

- Overview of the screening and referral processes
- Review of best practices from NC districts and charter schools
- Considerations for each grade span with relation to screening and referral processes
- Considerations regarding under-represented populations
- A review of common challenges that districts face in implementing best practices with screening and referral process, and some potential solutions to support district efforts
- Reflection questions for a district to consider in the pre-identification process

Part A: Overview of the Screening and Referral Processes

As an underlying foundation, begin with the understanding that the screening and referral processes are available for students at all points along the K-12 continuum.

The goal of the screening process is to gather information and build a body of evidence to examine for students who will be considered for AIG services. Through the screening process, a comprehensive learner profile will be developed and later evaluated to determine if a student has needs beyond what is provided in the regular classroom.

There may be multiple layers of gathering evidence involved in the screening process. The screening process includes the use of research-based tools and criteria that indicate, at a minimum, the potential for achievement (the likelihood a student will excel in the performance of a certain skill), aptitude (an inclination to excel in the performance of a certain skill), achievement (a demonstrated high performance in relation to standards and benchmarks), and/or demonstrated gifted behaviors.

The goal of the referral process is to ensure there is a mechanism for finding additional students who might not have been highlighted in the screening process.

Best practices for referral and screening at the K-12 level reflects a plan for capturing students who demonstrate a need for more challenging curriculum than what is provided by the regular education classroom through use and analysis of diagnostic assessments, observational tools, anecdotal evidence, student portfolios, etc.

As data is gathered keep in mind the notion of the different categories of giftedness. In North Carolina, students are identified as either academically or intellectually gifted or both academically and intellectually gifted.

Current categories of giftedness:

- **AG:** Academically Gifted - Most LEAs are defining Academically Gifted as students who have demonstrated high academic performance. This performance can be designated in a specific academic field (such as reading or math or in a combination of areas – like reading and math).
- **AIG:** Academically and Intellectually Gifted - Most LEAs are defining Academically and Intellectually Gifted as students who are demonstrating high intellectual capacity and high academic performance.
- **IG:** Intellectually Gifted - Most LEAs are defining Intellectually Gifted as students who have demonstrated high intellectual capacity but have not yet demonstrated high academic performance.

Evidence in the screening process includes quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative Data:

- Available achievement scores (examples include EOG, EOC, NCFE, BOG, PSAT, ACT suite of assessments, and other nationally /state normed achievement scores)
- Available aptitude scores (some common aptitude tests include CogAT, NNAT, and OLSAT)
- Data collected through a sweep screen, the intentional consideration of every student at selected grade level(s) by reviewing existing data and/or administering a grade level assessment to gather further information)
- Historical trend of high classroom achievement/performance

Qualitative Data:

- Anecdotal evidence (specific examples to support referral)
- Observational data focused on gifted behaviors, including teacher pleasing and non-pleasing behaviors.
- Student Work Samples or Portfolio (examples of high level student work to support referral)

An independent referral for the screening process may also be initiated by:

- Student (self-nomination)
- Peer
- Teacher
- Parent
- Administration/Faculty/Staff
- Community Member (Boy/Girl Scout Leader, afterschool tutor, Boy's/Girl's Club Leader, extracurricular teacher, coach, or other mentor)

Identification in PowerSchool:

To support district efforts to identify gifted learners, PowerSchool is programmed to allow for the following designations for gifted students:

- **AG** (Academically Gifted)
- ***AI** – this designation in PowerSchool allows districts to designate a student as BOTH Academically and Intellectually Gifted. (*Effective July 2016*)
- **AM** (Academically Gifted – in Math)
- **AR** (Academically Gifted – in Reading)
- **IG** (Intellectually Gifted)

Part B: Review of Best Practices from NC Districts and Charter Schools

- Accept referrals all year long.
- Establish large testing windows, but are responsive when individual needs arise.
- Provide multiple screening opportunities at multiple points along the K-12 continuum.
- Include teacher and behavior checklists that are research based for correlation and reliability.
- Collaborate with the other department(s) to share assessment and observational information to refer students who may be Twice Exceptional or English Language Learners.
- Consider those students who have quickly tested out of ELL services.
- Consider providing non-verbal testing opportunities.
- Develop formal documentation for students/teachers/parents to use when making independent referrals.
- Inform parents prior to sweep screening as to the purpose of the assessment, how data will be used by all teachers, and address the specific logistics of the testing window.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission before administering additional individual testing.
- Consider non-teacher pleasing behaviors when looking at screening and/or referrals, understanding that not all gifted students have behaviors that manifest in positive ways.
- Consult Exceptional Children's department for clarification about providing testing accommodations and modifications during sweep screens.
- Educate all staff members on gifted behaviors, both teacher pleasing and non-teacher pleasing, and the district's identification process.
- Consider differences in local school demographics and environments when educating staff members on gifted behaviors.

Part C: Considerations for Each Grade Span – Screening and Referral

ALL grades K-12

- Work with staff to better understand characteristics of giftedness, including non-teacher pleasing behaviors.
- Intentionally create varied learning environments, to ensure that many ways exist to see a student's strengths and best thinking.
- Consider the use of off-grade level assessments as appropriate.

Kindergarten - Second Grade

- Intentionally review all available data for K-2 students for evidence of need (some examples of data: mClass (TRC, DIBELS), K-2 math assessments, local baseline and benchmark assessment).
- Purposefully consider students who have been served through your district's talent development programming to cultivate potential.
- Develop a clear relationship between AIG Identification and single-subject, grade acceleration, and early admission to Kindergarten.

Grades 3 - 5

- Consider the administration of a grade level sweep screening opportunity.
- Intentionally review all available data for 3-5 students for evidence of need (some additional examples of data: mClass, TRC, DIBELS, local baseline and benchmark assessments, Science EOG). Consider collecting qualitative data (ex: staff or parent observation checklists)
- Purposefully review data for students who exhibit high participation in, and/or contributions to enriching extra-curricular activities, including clubs and academic competitions.
- Develop a clear relationship between single-subject or grade acceleration and AIG Identification.

Grades 6 - 12

- Intentionally review all available data for 6-8 students (historical EOG data, EVAAS, local baseline and benchmark assessments).
- Intentionally review all available data for 9-12 students (including AP/IB and other college-readiness measures, historical EOG/EOC/NCFE data, EVAAS, local baseline and benchmark assessments, ACT Suite).
- Purposefully review data for students who exhibit high interest in, participation in, and/or contributions to enriching extra-curricular activities.
- Consider additional sweep screen and/or intentional review to identify students who have demonstrated a need at this time.
- Purposefully review students who have been successful in atypical vs. typical learning environments, such as virtual learning, dual-enrollment, Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM).
- Encourage students to consider their own needs and self-refer for programming.

Part D: Considerations Regarding Under-Represented Populations

To combat disproportionality in gifted education and strive for equity and excellence, consider the following practices for ALL student populations:

1. Provide opportunities for teacher education to help combat common misperceptions of gifted learners and to support the ability to look at students with a strength mindset.
2. Use a variety of means to gather data to see a student's strengths and to better understand his or her needs.
3. Consider the social and emotional barriers that might limit personal views of a student's talent.
4. Providing each student the same opportunity to be recognized, perhaps through the use of a universal screener.

Underserved populations, including ethnically/ culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged, highly gifted, twice exceptional, and English language learners, may need intentional alternatives listed below to help students be recognized for their strengths.

Assessment:

- Aim for all measures to be culturally fair and unbiased (nondiscriminatory assessment).
- Consider the use of tools that are non-English language based, including tools in the student's native language or those which provide a non-verbal measure.
- Review assessment data to support identification in a single area to acknowledge dual exceptionality.
- Consider specific pathways to capture highly gifted so that their specific needs are acknowledged and can be addressed instructionally, including the opportunities for integrating acceleration as the need is demonstrated.

Communication and Collaboration:

- Ensure appropriate communication with all families in their native languages.
- Work with various instructional staff to fully understand and meet the needs of underserved populations which may be revealed through various assessment tools.

Inclusive Environments:

- Systematically include in screening process and then intentionally monitor the students' initial years within ELL support.
- Acknowledge that students from underserved populations may not have the experiential background that allows them to be successful on some identification measures.
- Intentionally include in early and ongoing efforts to cultivate potential through talent development opportunities.
- Create learning environments that are varied and encompass many access points to provide many opportunities that allow students to show strengths in a variety of areas.
- Recognize that gifted students from underserved populations may fall into any of the identification areas (IG, AG, AM, AR, AI).
- Consider that, for a Twice Exceptional student, the child's disability may mask his/her strength or vice versa.

Professional Development to Eliminate Bias:

- Acknowledge that gifted behaviors may be manifested differently than traditionally accepted/expected behaviors.
- Provide teacher education to combat misconceptions of giftedness and encourage viewing students with an “at potential” lens.

Part E: Potential Solutions to Common Challenges Districts Face

Q: How does the district help teachers and other staff understand gifted characteristics which in turn leads to more inclusive and informed referrals?

Provide ongoing professional development and dialogue with teachers and other staff. This might include “mini workshops,” critical conversations with individuals and/or collaborative planning teams (like PLC’s), use of scenarios at faculty meetings to highlight characteristics of the atypical gifted learner, formal gifted education coursework, and other opportunities.

Q: How can the district ensure a thorough and consistent screening opportunity, even with budget challenges?

Make efforts to understand and know the district’s budget – explore what fund sources are available for use with gifted programming efforts. Develop a healthy relationship with the district’s Finance Officer to better understand budget implications. Work with other departments to look at existing data available at district level that would not incur more costs, including data that would have been collected for the Multiple Tiered System of Support (MTSS) process. These data might include EOG, EOC, BOG, Benchmarks, PSAT, ACT suite of assessments, SAT, and mClass. If considering external assessments, when possible, consider local scoring and use school personnel for screeners and other testing. Finally, partner with other departments to allocate funds for external testing (sweep screening). More importantly, support those departments in helping others understand why it is so important to collect evidence and how these data will benefit the student, thus promoting widespread understanding and use of the data available.

Q: When is the optimal time to administer a grade-level or universal screening assessment?

Consider the district service model and other processes that might dictate screening and identification windows, etc. In addition, work with district accountability division/ area to understand NC testing laws, policies and procedures. Finally, be aware of various accommodations of students (IEP, 504, LEP).

Q: Is it good practice to employ universal screeners to ensure that ALL students are looked at during at least one point in time?

YES. Many districts do administer universal screening opportunities in upper elementary school, beginning with 3rd grade. Have a conversation with your district leadership team to consider at least one grade level opportunity and talk with other special areas who may benefit from the screening. (Example: EC, ELL, Title I and others)

Q: Should parent requests result in automatic testing?

Not necessarily. However, a parent referral might naturally begin a referral process to gather necessary data to make a decision about the need for further evidence. To support district efforts, ensure that parents are well-informed about the local identification processes to ensure better stakeholder understanding. Also recognize that a parent request may indicate a need for close review of available data to make an informed testing decision.

Q: How can the district take into consideration the impact of the screening process on finding giftedness in the under-represented populations?

Within the LEA's local plan, develop clear processes and protocols to comprehensively address finding the academic and/or intellectual gifts of all populations. Ensure that the plan includes a variety of learning environments that allow a student multiple opportunities to show his or her strengths. Additionally, provide learning experiences that enrich, extend, and accelerate the NC Standard Course of Study to intentionally nurture and support the development of a student's academic or intellectual giftedness. Consider carefully the role of professional development for staff involved in the identification process to support their comprehensive understanding of gifted characteristics.

Part F: Reflection Questions for a District to Consider

Consider screening as an ongoing process of intentionally looking for the academic and intellectual gifts and strengths within every child. Therefore, in considering the screening process, keep in mind that screening is not synonymous with a particular grade-level sweep screening only; instead, the screening process may be most effective when continuing through the K-12 spectrum. Districts are also encouraged to identify the sources of qualitative and quantitative data available to review to better understanding of the comprehensive needs of each individual learner. Use the questions below to assess current practice and determine how to improve both practice and policy with regards to the pre-identification processes of screening and referral.

1. Does the district have multiple opportunities for screening to occur across the K-12 continuum?
2. Has the district implemented a particular grade level for universal screening? If so, when does this occur?
3. How does the district plan clearly articulate the screening and referral processes?
4. Does the district require a specific number of mandatory criteria that may limit placements?
5. How is the district screening process inclusive, casting a wide net?
6. How does the district's screening and referral process allow a child who shows a need for differentiated services the opportunity to be recognized?
7. What is the district doing to promote the talent development of students from under-represented populations?
8. How is the district promoting talent development for all students in primary grades?
9. How does the district ensure that under-represented populations are being fairly and equitably considered for gifted identification?

IDENTIFICATION OF ACADEMICALLY OR INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED STUDENTS

In this final section of the guide, districts will consider questions that refer specifically to the identification process. With Article 9B leading gifted programming in North Carolina, school districts are fortunate to be able to develop screening, referral and identification processes that best meet their own local needs and context. This flexibility ensures that each district is able to ultimately better identify and serve students who have advanced learning needs in their local schools, based on their local needs. The goal for districts will be to examine the guidance and then apply the information to their local context for each of the following areas:

- Overview of identification
- Best practices in identification as seen in NC districts
- Considerations for the identification of intellectually gifted (IG) students
- A review of common challenges that districts face in implementing best practices with the identification process, and some potential solutions to support district efforts

Part A: Overview of Identification

Goal of identification process:

- To examine/ evaluate the body of evidence gathered during the screening and referral process to determine if a student qualifies for AIG identification and services.

Purpose of the identification process:

- To ensure that students with advanced learning needs are identified and served.

Key Reminders:

- No single criteria excludes a child from identification and services; however, eligibility may be determined through a single exceptional criterion.
- Within the body of evidence that is gathered, students from every population, including across all cultural groups, all economic strata, and human endeavors are given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability through a multiple criteria approach.

Part B: Best Practices in Identification as Seen in NC Districts

During initial planning steps, districts determine each of the following:

1. What data will be collected at each grade level or grade span?
2. What will be the eligibility criteria the district utilizes to identify giftedness (academic and intellectual)?
3. What team will analyze the comprehensive learning profile to determine if the data indicates a need for gifted services?
4. Will the review of student data be a school-based or a district level committee/ team decision?
5. How will the district ensure that the identification process is consistently implemented across the district at all grade levels or grade spans?
6. How will information about the identification process be shared with parents?
7. At what points will district personnel obtain appropriate parent permission for conducting assessments, beyond those required for the initial screening process, and for providing services to students?
8. How will the steps in the identification process be formally documented?

After the initial planning, districts consider how to accomplish the following tasks:

- Match the services that will be offered to the identification data for the student by developing programming options that match the demonstrated need(s) highlighted in the data collection process.
- Review student performance data periodically for identified students to ensure appropriate services are offered.
 - Keep in mind that as new evidence becomes available, the student identification may change and identification in a new area may be added.
 - In other cases, where students are no longer performing at substantially high levels, districts are strongly encouraged to find ways to flexibly serve the student according to his or her current demonstrated needs as opposed to the practice of “de-gifting” students.

- Use local norms as much as possible, as local data provide a frame of reference for a particular student's score in relation to other students within the same local learning environment.
 - Delineate identification so differentiation needs are evident (highly gifted are acknowledged in schools where there are many children who meet eligibility criteria).
 - Consider using local and/or school norms to support identification for students when in the school there is a low percentage of the population identified.
- Identify the unique sources of data that are available to support identification decisions for primary-aged students.
- Consider establishing a process to evaluate students who have been admitted to kindergarten early for gifted services.
- Analyze data from other early grades advanced programs and services, including grade or subject acceleration.
- Ensure consistent timeline and processes for gathering and analyzing data across the district.

Part C: Considerations for the Identification of Intellectually Gifted (IG) Students

As an initial step, when developing criteria, policy, and programming for intellectually gifted students, districts clearly define Intellectually Gifted (IG) in a way that honors local context.

Many districts define IG students as students who may perform in the superior range on aptitude or non-verbal components of assessments with less realized academic achievement performance. This definition recognizes that not all intellectually gifted students are going to display gifted characteristics in an “achievement-based” way. In instances where IG is defined in this way, the district often chooses not to include criteria related to achievement as an indicator of giftedness needed for eligibility.

As the district develops its definition of and criteria for Intellectually Gifted (IG), carefully consider the services that will be available. To optimally develop the potential of IG students, possible ideas for services might include:

- Engagement in a rich and challenging curriculum, like project-based learning, problem-based learning, interest-based exploration and independent study opportunities
- Providing support structures to address the factors/circumstances which inhibit transfer of intellect into academic performance
- Raising awareness of the social and emotional factors that may inhibit successful academic performance
- Employing strategies to develop and explore leadership development and/or personal and academic organizational support. These college access or planning strategies might be similar to Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies and programming options.

Part D: Common Challenges and Potential Solutions for Identification

Q: How does a district create an effective and comprehensive identification policy?

A comprehensive identification policy takes the following into consideration:

- Evaluate district identification data, including sub group analysis, to determine how the district is meeting the needs of the top students.
- District's eligibility criteria which include one possible measure for each indicator of giftedness (i.e., achievement, aptitude, potential to achieve, and other demonstrated gifted behaviors).
- Utilize additional pieces of evidence to support a student nomination, rather than negatively impact the student.
- Utilize behavior and teacher checklists which are research based for correlation studies and reliability. These tools may be considered at multiple entry points, rather than using one in a particular grade for the student's entire educational career.
- Collect evidence which reflects the holistic needs of the student – and will therefore assist the district identification team in making a match with service delivery.

Q: How can the district develop an identification system which does not create multiple hoops?

Collect data to support the development of a comprehensive data profile, that helps to understand a student's individual needs and strengths. The district asks the following questions:

- Are there multiple pieces of evidence that assess the same indicator of giftedness?
- Which indicators of giftedness will the district collect evidence on?
- How many criteria are needed to qualify for gifted services?
- Which philosophy will the district use when evaluating multiple criteria?
 - If the district uses the "and" philosophy, looking for evidence in aptitude and achievement and teacher ratings on observed gifted characteristics, as well as other measures, the pool of potential candidates will be limited.
 - By contrast, when the district uses an "or" philosophy, looking for evidence in some of the indicators but not in all indicators, the pool of potential candidates will be expanded.
 - When using the mean scores, averaging various scores from the various indicators of giftedness, the pool of potential candidates is larger than when using the "and" philosophy, but smaller than when using the "or" philosophy.

Q: How does a district implement the identification process consistently across a district?

District leadership provides the following for school and/or district-based identification teams:

- Resources and materials which align identification decisions with the district AIG Plan.
- Training which targets how to communicate with parents and families about identification decisions and complete appropriate documentation.
- Opportunities to participate in internal identification audit(s) to review screening and identification data to ensure that students have been identified consistently across the district.

Q: How does a district match the student's identification with meaningful and intentional service delivery options?

Periodically, those providing leadership for gifted programs participate in the following practices:

- Evaluate data to develop a deep understanding of the comprehensive needs of the student and then determine service options that will match these needs.
- Evaluate the type of services that students will receive and use this understanding to guide and impact identification criteria.
- Document the services provided for the student in the student's Differentiated Education Plan (DEP).
- Challenge the district to be creative in offering new programming options to meet student needs, using both traditional and non-traditional methods (consider flexible grouping options, piloting research-based strategies, include virtual education options, utilizing various content acceleration options).

Q: How can a district support parents in understanding the identification process?

The AIG Coordinator, in conjunction with district AIG leadership, might consider the following strategies:

- Offer annual parent meetings that provide an overview of the identification process (example: offer a "Gifted 101" course for parents).
- Post information on the school and/or district website.
- Share information about process through other written communication forms (might include newsletters or other published articles).
- Expect teachers to be active partners in the search for discovering talent in students; using an at-potential lens to view students' strengths.

Q: How does a district develop a quality identification system? What is the first step?

Bring together the AIG Team and take time to reflect on the current status of the district. Gather and analyze three critical data sets:

1. Local assessment data. At what level do the most advanced students typically appear? Where is the level that typically indicates students needing differentiated services on various assessments? Local norms will help guide criteria development.
2. Profiles of students currently identified. Which students are already identified and served that the district wants to make sure continue to be identified and served? Validate what works.
3. Profiles of students that were not identified, but should have been. Which student did that teacher know was gifted but did not qualify? Which student did a teacher not bring forward because she knew the student would not qualify, even though the student needed something different? What causes the district to miss these students? A specific criterion, a service option, perception? Have teachers think back and openly share about these students. This data set will push the district to think differently.

After considering each of these data sets independently, triangulate the data and think about how they are inter-related. Through this process, it will become clearer what changes the district needs to make to improve its identification criteria.

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