

Alexander County Schools
Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Plan
Effective 2019-2022

Approved by local Board of Education on: 03-JUN-19
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Alexander County Schools has developed this local AIG plan based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBE, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018). These Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate and implement 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 relate to the categories 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 an LEA should have in place, and guide LEAs to improve their programs.

As LEAs continue to transform their AIG Programs and align to the AIG Program Standards, LEAs participated in a self-assessment process of their local AIG program, which involved multiple stakeholders. The data gathered during this process guided LEAs in their development of this local AIG plan for 2019-2022. This local AIG plan has been approved by the LEA's board of Education and sent to NC DPI for comment.

For 2019-2022, Alexander County Schools local AIG plan is as follows:

Alexander County Schools Vision for local AIG program: Alexander County School System (ACSS) will graduate highly-skilled, globally competitive students.

The AIG Programs Vision is to support this vision as is every program in Alexander County Schools.

Sources of funding for local AIG program (as of 2019)

State Funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other Funding
\$264548.00	\$15000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

12/11/2019

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

District Response: The following procedures for identification and placement, including the AIG Placement Pathways, will be shared with all principals at Monthly Principals' Meeting, with Instructional Coaches at Weekly Instructional Coaches' Meeting, to teachers via instructional coaches, and with parents through school-based Parent Advisory Meetings, email, and district-level and school-level AIG website.

Identification Areas are Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI), the highest students in both reading and achievement in Reading and Math, Academically Gifted in Math (AM), Academically Gifted in Reading (AR), and Intellectually Gifted in ability but not achieving to potential (IG).

Students in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade will be identified through teacher recommendation. These recommended students will then be assessed using NNAT3 (non-verbal). All Alexander County Schools (ACS) K-12th grade reading and math teachers are recommended take three AIG Local Endorsement classes. The district has a process for ensuring all indicated teachers complete these courses by grouping staff into cohorts to complete the courses. The courses are currently assigned to Cohort 4 of the ACS Reading and Math Teachers. These courses target meeting the needs of high achieving or intellectually gifted students within the classroom. If teachers require further assistance in meeting these needs, they will request help from the Instructional Coach or state certified AIG Teacher within the school. If the instructional coach or same-school-based AIG Teacher cannot help, the Director of Advanced Programs will be contacted for assistance.

A universal screening occurs in 4th Grade using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). All students who score 90th percentile or above will be placed on a list of potentially identified AIG students. This, paired with a score of 90th percentile or above on EOG Reading and Math Tests, will qualify a student for AIG identification and services.

Regardless, any student at any grade level can be potentially identified by administrator, counselor, teacher, or parent recommendation.

The Director of Advanced Programs will enter relevant demographic, aptitude and achievement data into an ongoing tracking document for AIG Identification. Relevant record data includes CogAT Composite Score, CogAT Verbal Score, CogAT Quantitative Score, CogAT Nonverbal Score, EOG Scores, and if applicable, alternative aptitude or achievement assessment scores. The result spreadsheet will record the status of students in the potentially identified as AIG process by the labels of AI, AG, AR, AM, IG, or FLAGGED.

As a potentially identified AIG student qualifies, documenting paperwork will be filled out and sent to the school's AIG contact; most often, this is the instructional coach, counselor, principal, or lead AIG

teacher. If approved by the principal, the AIG School Contact will contact the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to notify, explain the qualification pathway, and service delivery. Identification paperwork is signed by the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Director of Advanced Programs.

The placement criteria for AIG Services for 2019-2022 in Grades K-12 in Alexander County Schools is as follows:

Pathway One: Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI) requires all components:
Aptitude test composite score of 95th percentile or above, and
Achievement tests of 95th percentile or above in Reading and Math

Pathway Two: Academically Gifted in Reading (AR), Academically Gifted in Math (AM), or Academically Gifted in Reading and Math (AG) requires all components in each category:

Academically Gifted in Reading (AR)
Aptitude test composite score of 90th percentile or above in Reading, and
Achievement test of 90th percentile or above in Reading

Academically Gifted in Math (AM)
Aptitude test composite score of 90th percentile or above in Math, and
Achievement test of 90th percentile or above in Math, and
Academically Gifted in Reading and Math (AG)
Aptitude test composite score of 90th percentile or above in Reading and Math
Achievement test of 90th percentile or above in Reading and Math

Pathway Three: Intellectually Gifted (IG) required one of the components be met:
Aptitude test composite score of 95th percentile or above, or
Aptitude test verbal score of 95th percentile or above, or
Aptitude test quantitative score of 95th percentile or above.

If a student on the potentially identified list does not place by any pathway, the student will be considered for testing if he/she is from an underrepresented population. Retesting will be done using the NNAT-3 for students needing a non-verbal ability assessment, OLSAT for aptitude, or IOWA for achievement. Retesting occurs using a computer-based assessment in a small group setting.

For students who enter the district placed AIG from another district or state, Alexander County will generally honor the placement from another district (K-12). The receiving school principal or designee will review the previous district's qualifying information. The principal can then recommend if further testing or information is needed.

The Director of Advanced Programs is responsible for ensuring no student is denied placement for services based on one test score.

Practice 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.

District Response: Universal screening is provided to all 4th graders. Referrals are accepted from teachers, parents, and students and given to each school's counselor or AIG Contact. Evidences in the screening, referral, and identification processes are both qualitative and quantitative, including: 1) EOC, EOG, NCFE, BOG, Explore, PLAN, ACT, and other nationally/state-normed achievement tests, 2) Available aptitude scores, 3) Broad sweep screenings (CogAT), 4) Historical trends of classroom achievement and performance, and 5) teacher and parent input. For students K-2, universal screener tools, such as mClass or iReady, and the MTSS process are used to identify potential giftedness. Referrals are accepted from students, parents, or teachers, and forms can be found on the district AIG webpage. Referrals are accepted at any time of the year, but identification for potential AIG occurs once in the fall and once in the spring of the school year. Identification recommendations are made by each school's Student Support Team which is appointed by each school's principal and guided by a locally or state endorsed AIG licensed staff member.

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, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

District Response: Tests used in the pathways for identification and placement specifically include non-verbal assessments which, research shows, assist in the identification of underrepresented populations. Additional options to retest ability with a non-verbal test are advantageous to English Learners. The pathway of AI specifically targets highly gifted learners. With the conversation shift regarding AIG student recommendations to an MTSS setting, further underrepresented populations should begin to be identified out of the intervention data reviewed by teams.

Practice D

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

District Response: The large-scale identification process begins with a system-wide screening on fourth graders during the fall of each year. The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) is administered by classroom teachers, with all test training and procedures followed. Scores are provided to the AIG Director, Principals, and District Curriculum Coaches. With these scores, students are identified according to district eligibility guidelines. Transfer students with AIG identification will be accepted and identified as AIG in Alexander County Schools, after principals review identification material to ensure the student meets the county criteria. For K-3, principals are made aware of potentially or identified gifted students from other school districts. Students in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade will be identified through teacher recommendation. These recommended students will then be assessed using NNAT3 (non-verbal). The Director of Advanced Programs will review the screening, referral, and identification processes with all principals bi-annually to ensure fidelity to the process.

Practice E

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

District Response: Targeted presentations occur to inform parents and families and community of the opportunities, events, and applications for AIG students. Resources are posted on the District AIG Website, and through automated calls. When appropriate, the parent or families' native language is used.

Practice 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.

District Response: Every child that is identified and placed as AIG will have a folder with identification paperwork signed by the Director of Advanced Programs and the student's parent(s) /guardian(s). This will be accompanied by the student's service options. This same information is shared with principal and teachers for service plan implementation. The service options will be reviewed annually by classroom teacher, parents, and/or principal.

Ideas for Strengthen the Standard: Previous plans forecasted implementing the MTSS and Student Support Team for placement and identification of AIG students. Currently, the current AIG Plan utilizes this team for AIG identification recommendations. As this aspect is developed, more components of identification can be added.

Since CogAT materials have been updated and paired with new testing protocols (OLSAT, IOWA, NNAT-3) a more comprehensive and holistic assessment process is possible. Testing protocols will be examined annually to ensure they remain effective.

To adapt to a digital environment, other than the CogAT screener, all other testing protocols are digital device based, both for assessment and scoring.

Sources of Evidence: AIG student folders

Procedures for Identification and Placement (online and presentation)

Meeting Agendas

Signature Forms for Annual Reviews

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.

Practice 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.

District Response: Alexander County Schools' AIG programs and services are comprehensive in meeting the needs of gifted learners in all grade levels and classrooms.

K-3 - While students are not typically identified in K-3, classroom teachers and Instructional Coaches are in partnership to provide strategies and nurture potential giftedness. When a student demonstrates giftedness, teachers and AIG-IC provide and develop materials to meet the needs of the student, along with submitting an AIG Teacher Referral to the school-level team. The CogAT is given to all 4th graders as the first step towards formal gifted identification.

4-8 - The CogAT is given to all 4th graders as the first step towards formal gifted identification. Previously, the CogAT was delivered in the 3rd grade. However, to decrease the quantity of assessments for third grade students, ACS has elected to move it universal screener to the Fall of 4th Grade, eliminating one third grade assessment, and only shifting the formal identification process by approximately a month. AIG students are clustered in locally and state endorsed AIG teachers' classrooms. These teachers, administrators, and AIG-IC when requested, work to cluster groups for compacting, differentiating, or accelerating instruction. Ensuring the social-emotional needs, school counselors and other support staff provide enrichment and other opportunities.

9-12 - AIG students will be offered upper level, Honors-Level, Capstone and Advanced Placement courses. High school counselors will consult with AIG students about individual schedules and extracurricular opportunities (i.e. Governor's School, NCSSM, etc.). They will encourage our academically gifted students while supporting their social-emotional well-being.

Practice B

Integrates and connects AIG services with the total instructional program and resources of the LEA in policy and practice.

District Response: Students in Kindergarten through Third Grade are flexibly grouped through performance data analysis. For students in Fourth and Fifth Grades, AIG students are clustered or flexibly grouped. AIG students with identification in math are clustered/flexibly grouped for math, likewise for AIG students identified in reading. When arriving to middle school, grades six through eight, AIG students are placed in the same class as other AIG students identified for Math and/or Reading. Seventh grade AIG students scoring a level 5 on the 7th Grade EOG are placed in an advanced Math class, specifically Math I, in 8th grade. Upon reaching high school, as part of self-advocacy instruction, AIG students meet with their counselor and develop a four-year plan for their

schedule. Such a plan might include increasing academic courses taken in the ninth and tenth grade year to take Advanced Placement Courses, NCSSM classes, Capstone Courses, dual enrollment, etc.

Throughout all grades of education, student data is analyzed to provide the best program and services within the goals and resources of our LEA. If individual student data or performance does not support acceleration, enrichment, or extensions in a given grade or course, an AIG student may remain in the core curriculum or remediation. This does not mean the student is no longer AIG, but rather an individual student's AIG services and programs can change to meet his needs.

Practice C

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

District Response: Alexander County School Strategic Plan addresses student success, professional excellence, lifelong literacy, collaborative community, educational technology, optimal operations, and emotional wellness. Within each overarching goal, the objectives exist that weave the AIG program into the district's vision. As an example, student success maintains the following objectives: students will be challenged through advanced opportunities in core instruction, in accelerated learning groups, advanced placement courses, and dual enrollment opportunities; Middle and high school staff will work collaboratively with school administrators and central office directors to explore, plan, build, and provide virtual-blended courses; learning experiences will be enhanced through the intentional use of technology resources, building capacity for enhanced learning; middle and high school teachers, administrators, and staff will provide nontraditional opportunities for students to demonstrate course mastery and attain course credit. Implementing opportunities such as dual enrollment, credit recovery, credit by demonstrated mastery, virtual courses, and blended classes allows students to graduate high school with college credits; and principals and the School Improvement Teams will craft master schedules that incorporate, at a minimum of three times per week, structured opportunities for remediation and enrichment of student learning. Furthermore, the professional development plan for Advanced Programs includes monthly trainings for teachers to benefit gifted students.

AIG students are flexibly grouped in core academic classes. Enrichment/Intervention time, mentioned earlier from the district strategic plan, should have AIG students grouped in their identification areas. Throughout all grades of education, student data is analyzed to provide the best program and services within the goals and resources of our LEA. If individual student data or performance does not support acceleration, enrichment, or extensions in a given grade or course, an AIG student may remain in the core curriculum or remediation. This does not mean the student is no longer AIG, but rather an individual student's AIG services and programs can change to meet his needs.

Practice 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.

District Response: Communicating about gifted education is an ever-present process in Alexander County Schools. Student plans are reviewed at least annually by teachers; principals and curriculum leaders are briefed monthly on changes, updates, or information; the district maintains a website with AIG information and resources; ensure reading and math teachers, Kindergarten through twelfth grade, are in a cohort for local AIG endorsement, have state credentials, or are part of Northwest RESA's regional local AIG endorsement summer training. AIG trained teachers are participants at faculty meetings, PLC meetings, and MTSS teams.

Practice E

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

District Response: It is imperative that effective communication continue between teachers and schools. The focus will be to collaborate between AIG-Instructional Coaches and school PLCs, counselors, and principals to maintain effective communication on AIG services and initiatives. With this communication, high school counselors speak/meet with 8th grade students in the spring of the school year before registration at the high school or early college to discuss options for the four-year high school plan, enrichment opportunities, university requirements, etc. Elementary and middle school counselors partnered with Instructional Coaches, assist fifth grade students with the transition from elementary to middle school. Teachers will also receive best practices training and performance-based learning training in professional developments during the school year.

Practice F

Addresses the social and emotional needs of AIG students through collaboration among school counseling personnel, regular education teachers, AIG specialists, and others.

District Response: Administrators, Instructional Coaches, and locally endorsed AIG teachers will continue to work together to establish stronger MTSS teams which, in partnership with the school counselor, provide tools and resources for teachers and families to support the social and emotional needs of AIG students. AIG Teachers will, through professional development, complete a book study of Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students: Helping Kids Cope With Explosive Feelings by Christine Fonseca.

Furthermore, the district's strategic plan now includes a goal specifically focused on meeting social-emotional needs of our students. It reads:

Strategy 1: ACS will establish and implement policies and procedures to support emotional wellness for students and staff.

1.1 Develop a District Team to identify needs and strategies. The team will be made up of various relevant personnel throughout the district (i.e. nurse, counselor, social worker, school administration, district leadership, and behavior support personnel).

1.2 District Team will complete various assessments (i.e. SHAPE assessment, surveys, etc.)

1.3 The District Team will use data gathered from assessments and other resources to support program planning.

1.4 Investigate and implement an Employee Assistance Program for all ACS staff.

1.5 Investigate and provide stress-management resources for all ACS staff.

Strategy 2: ACS employees will engage in high-quality professional development supporting the emotional wellness of students and staff.

2.1 ACS non-certified personnel will be provided annual professional development on the subject of emotional wellness (i.e. Mental Health First Aid).

2.2 ACS certified staff will be provided annual professional development on the subject of emotional wellness including trauma and resilience (i.e. Reconnect for Resilience and Trauma Informed Training).

2.3 ACS Beginning Teachers and new teachers to the district will be provided professional development in the area of emotional wellness during orientation.

2.4 Intensive and direct professional development will be provided for school-based Student Support Staff to address behavioral and mental wellness.

Practice G

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

District Response: Acceleration for a gifted student can be both social and academic. Our system utilizes the MTSS process to identify potential AIG students to accelerate. Such factors are used in consideration:

- student should score in the 98th percentile in multiple areas, in both aptitude and achievement,
- a school psychologist may further assess the student,
- specificity of individualization (grade advancement, concurrent instruction, single subject advancement, etc.)
- data to determine skill gaps, plan instruction, and goals for instruction,
- consider individual characteristics and needs (physical maturity, height, emotional stability, motivation, ability to handle challenge, etc.).

Compacting instruction enables gifted students to skip curriculum standards and objectives and take challenging content in its place. This is processed through three steps; first, establishing the goals of the challenge content; then, determining the students who have mastered the lesson to be taught, and finally, providing the acceleration and enrichment options.

Credit by Demonstrated Mastery is handled by the Advanced Programs Department, and all staff

supporting AIG students assist when appropriate.

Practice 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.

District Response: As Alexander County School MTSS Teams progress in their practice, teachers are becoming stronger data leaders, specifically in this instance, to subgroups and underrepresented demographics in AIG. We serve a large percentage of our gifted students in the regular classroom, but all schools (excluding grades 9-12) have built-in an enrichment/intervention time into the master schedule. Indeed, the district's strategic plan states, "Principals and the School Improvement Teams will craft master schedules that incorporate structured opportunities for remediation and enrichment of student learning at a minimum of three times per week."

Revisiting the MTSS Team's role in identification of underrepresented populations, school teams occasionally request varied screening tools and methods for EL, ED, 2E, and others. Our district uses CogAT as a universal AIG screener in 4th grade, and this test allows for IEP and Section 504 Modifications. A more user-friendly teacher referral form will be used to allow for greater ease in staff identification of potential AIG students.

Practice I

Encourages extra-curricular programs and events that enhance and further develop the needs and interests of AIG students.

District Response: Alexander County Schools encourages a broad range of activities that meet the needs and interests of AIG students including but not limited to:

- Battle of the Books (Elementary and Middle)
- NCSSM classes including three full courses offered at a high school and students who attend NCSSM online
- Middle School Geography Bee
- County Spelling Bee for students in third grade through eighth graders
- Stock Market Clubs
- Junior Beta Club
- Beta Club
- Real Money/Real World Program (Middle School Level)
- Artist in Residence Program
- District Holiday Card Art Competition
- Advanced courses in Chorus and Band
- All-district Band Auditions
- STEAM Days
- 3-D Printers at all elementary schools

12/11/2019

- Duke TIP
- Little Read in partnership with Lenoir-Rhyne University Visiting Writers Series

Ideas for Strengthen the Standard: Ensure all teacher cohorts complete the local-endorsement option if needed, and then target areas of AIG need based on annual data assessment. Develop AIG Performance-Based Learning Days for Elementary and Middle School students. Develop local summer enrichment opportunities.

Sources of Evidence: PLC, SST, and District Leadership Agenda and Minutes

Transcriptions of all-calls

Handouts or trainings to principals, support staff, counselors, and instructional coaches-AIG/Lead AIG Teachers

Applications for CDM (if used)

Class schedules for enrichment blocks or learning

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.

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 through the use of differentiation strategies, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration.

District Response: Instructional Coaches-AIG and AIG Lead teachers collaborate with general classroom teachers to discuss individual student needs and provide instructional assistance with identified AIG students. Additionally, the IC-AIG and AIG Leads plan with content area teachers to enrich the curriculum delivery within the general classroom. As part of our district's goal to integrate AIG identification and services into the MTSS process, our service options will be prescriptive tiers. As with all students, Tier 1 occurs within the general curriculum with differentiation to meet AIG students' needs. At this tier, curriculum is modified and adapted to address the different levels of student need and interest. Teachers of AIG students modify or adapt core curriculum by content, process, or product. The content is differentiated by increasing the pace of instruction, or the deeper skills with the standard. The instruction should challenge gifted learning and re-design what mastery looks like for these students. AIG students are then able to demonstrate mastery and depth of knowledge by multiple venues - oral or written presentations, performance-based projects, etc. Moving into Tier II, supplemental instruction occurs, in the form of enrichment or intervention. Students who require additional support to be challenged are pushed to this level. Just as with at-risk students at Tier II, students at this level need additional support, opportunities, and instruction based on their needs and rate of skill acquisition. As noted earlier in Alexander County Schools' AIG Plan, the district's strategic plan states, "Principals and the School Improvement Teams will craft master schedules that incorporate structured opportunities for remediation and enrichment of student learning at a minimum of three times per week." Tier II instructional time and opportunities are built into all schools' instructional schedule. Instruction and learning opportunities for students take the form of enrichment opportunities, such as district-wide cross-grade level AIG performance-based project days, accelerated courses including Math I for eighth graders, and curriculum compacting. The full continuum of support is to be made available to meet student needs. Finally, Tier III is for those students who need intensive intervention and support. These students comprise a smaller portion of our AIG population. Service options for AIG students at this tier, with individual consideration, includes, grade acceleration, early promotion to elementary, middle, high, or college, Advanced Placement and/or Capstone Courses, Credit by Demonstrated Mastery, etc.

Practice 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.

District Response: Alexander County Schools provides ongoing professional development for

classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators addressing best practice in curriculum and instruction, including with gifted students. Locally-endorsed AIG teachers model and share expertise, guide grade level PLCs, and track student data. These teachers assist other teachers in development of lessons and instructional materials to address the needs of gifted students. Additionally, NWRESA is offering a Regional AIG Local Endorsement honored by all districts in the Northwest Region. Additionally, this training would prepare participants to take the AIG Praxis, should they choose. AIG program staff and Instructional Coaches assist principals in scheduling or grouping students based on data. Cluster grouping guidance is 6-8 students in a reasonable group in a classroom of approximately 20 students. This is merely a guidance ratio.

Practice C

Incorporates a variety of evidence-based resources that enhance student learning.

District Response: Alexander County School Department of Advanced Programs maintains a continuously updating professional and instructional resource library. Resource topics include differentiation, problem, project, and performance-based learning, critical thinking, social and emotional needs of the gifted learner and multitudes of others. A Google Form can be found on the Advance Programs' District Website to request materials or book studies. For schools with higher AIG populations, materials have been given for those site-based resource libraries.

All elementary schools (AIG Teachers) will be trained on/and provided a copy of Differentiated Projects for Gifted Students by Brenda Holt McGee and Debbie Triska Keiser. All schools (AIG Teachers) will be trained on/and provided a copy of Teaching Gifted Kids in Today's Classroom by Susan Winebrenner. Through the District MTSS Social Emotional Learning Team, content teachers will receive strategy and training on Emotional Intensity in Gifted Students: Helping Kids Cope With Explosive Feelings by Christine Fonseca.

Michael Clay Thompson's book, Caesar's English, is provided for 4th and 5th grade classrooms, and middle and high schools are utilizing Word within a Word. Books for Battle of the Books at Elementary and Middle School are purchased and provided annually. Competitions are organized to promote the love of reading. Elementary schools in partnership with Lenoir-Rhyne University Visiting Writer Series provide a novel, curriculum, and author meet and greet with book signing. Technology 1:1 Initiative (Grades 3-12) allows students across grade spans to take classes ranging from STEM to NCSSM.

Practice D

Fosters the development of future-ready skills including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and leadership.

District Response: Alexander County Schools has a 1:1 initiative. The high, middle, and elementary schools use a Learning Management System (LMS) to better individualize instruction and allow for collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and creativity. Teachers utilize Google Classroom, Moodle, and Canvas to create differentiated lessons and instruction for advanced learners. The district also utilized an LMS to locally-endorse teachers in AIG. Through the experiential learning, the

teachers set up a scenario by which students can explore deep dives in instructional content and interest topics.

Furthermore, we reach outside our school community to develop partnerships to offer our advanced students content and skill development at an advanced level. Many of these community partners provide material, experiences, instruction, and resources to our teachers and students.

In Alexander County Schools we strive to bring an innovative practice to our classrooms. Most of our classrooms are outfitted with interactive whiteboards, document cameras, teacher computers, and projectors. At each grade level, a variety of technologies are used to engage and motivate students. For instance, in the lower primary grades several teachers are using the SeeSaw to promote student-managed learning with online journaling and blogging. Also, several teachers have attended professional development to learn best practices for using G Suite apps (Google Apps) for digital teaching and learning. In every school, there are technologically savvy teachers using tools such as Screencast-Matic, Annotate.net, Classkick, Sphero, Canvas, and DoInk Green Screen (for student creation).

Furthermore, special interest clubs like Robotics clubs, Rocket clubs, chess clubs, soap box derby cars, and other STEM activities are offered on a regular basis per our strategic plan.

Practice E

Uses on-going assessment, both formative and summative, to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction and inform flexible grouping practices.

District Response: Alexander County Schools, through the MTSS process, uses iReady as a universal screener. mClass/TRC are other assessment tools to determine individual needs. In addition, starting in third grade, reading and math classes utilize pre- and post-tests, and district benchmarks assessments are given and analyzed via SchoolNet. As with all useful data, formative assessments should be on-going.

Practice F

Addresses the social and emotional needs of AIG students through affective curricular and instructional practices.

District Response: The district also utilized an LMS to locally-endorse teachers in AIG. Beginning in Kindergarten, elementary students have a range of instructional practices with social and emotional support. These options include:

- Cluster Grouping
- Flexible Grouping
- Differentiated Instruction
- Teacher consults with AIG Specialist/Instructional Coaches
- Interest-based activities
- Technology-based opportunities
- Differentiated instruction

Duke TIP
Enrichment activities
AIG-IC consultation with student
For middle schools:
Cluster Grouping
Flexible Grouping
Differentiated Instruction
Teacher consults with Instructional Coaches
Interest-based activities
Technology-based opportunities
Differentiated instruction
Duke TIP
Enrichment activities
AIG-IC consultation with student
Advanced math and/or language opportunities
For high school:
Advanced and Honors classes
Advanced electives
Schedule planning with counselor
Advanced Placement
Governor's School opportunities
Dual Enrollment

Teachers take local professional development from in-house mental health and social-emotional learning professionals. Students with social-emotional needs are clustered or flexibly grouped with teachers and student groups to support these needs. PLCs and then MTSS teams problem-solve for students with counseling or intervention groups.

High school freshman AIG students benefit from a Freshman Academy to foster skills and transition to high school by strengthening the necessary skills to be successful.

Practice G

Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students through purposeful and intentional differentiated curriculum and instruction.

District Response: All students begin and progress at different levels and rates, respectively. All students deserve to be taught and challenged to reach their highest potential. We encourage our teachers to complete our local endorsement for AIG in order for them to utilize strategies and differentiated curriculum to meet the needs of AIG students. We have implemented iReady for identification and monitoring and will be tracking this implementation in all elementary schools. Furthermore, we are encouraging principals to consider NWRESA's regional endorsement for AIG teachers when considering professional development goals each year. The district AIG program will work with principals to implement acceleration, enrichment, and advancement within their schools. Additionally, over the life of the current AIG Plan, district elementary administrators will participate in a book study of *Opening Doors: The Administrator's Guide to the Schoolwide Enrichment Model* by Nora G. Friedman.

The district will also, over the life of the plan, beginning performance-based project learning days for students K-3 initially, then expanding to 4-5, and 6-8.

Practice H

Develops and implements differentiated curriculum and instruction through collaboration among regular education teachers, AIG personnel, and other related instructional staff.

District Response: Like many students, AIG students' school day is spent with content classroom teachers. As such, the bulk of enriched and/advanced instruction is provided by these teachers. In order to ensure appropriate instruction continued collaboration is tantamount. Instructional Coaches-AIG and AIG Lead teachers collaborate with general classroom teachers to discuss individual student needs and provide instructional assistance with identified AIG students. Additionally, the IC-AIG and AIG Leads plan with content area teachers to enrich the curriculum delivery within the general classroom. All instructional staff at grade levels have developed or updated focus maps for Math, Science, ELA, and Social Studies. These maps are key to individualizing instruction to meet student need. The Honors Level focus maps have further been reviewed by the Superintendent of Curriculum, Director of Exceptional Children, Director of Advanced Programs, and Director of High School Curriculum. IC-AIG and AIG Leads work with all staff to help meet individual gifted student's need and consult with the Director of Advanced Programs.

Practice 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.

District Response: DEPs are completed annually, and teachers review strategies and plans. We are in the process of revising this process to more actively include parents to shift the annual plan reviews to include discussion. DEPs in transitional years from elementary to middle, and middle to high, obtain input from parents, teachers, and students, when appropriate.

Ideas for Strengthen the Standard: Add more enrichment project days for students K-8.
Foster community partnerships to enhance the experiences of the project days.
Partner with CTE to target AIG students in STEM activities.
Increase Tier I and Tier II SEL resources.

Sources of Evidence: DEPs

PLC minutes and agenda
Pictures and Publications of Project Days
MTSS SEL Referrals of AIG students
Focus Maps

Transitional Meeting Notes
Teacher Evaluations

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.

Practice A

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

District Response: The job description of the Director of Advanced Programs includes the AIG Program. The Director of Advanced Programs consults with a team of three state certified AIG-licensed teachers. Among this team, decisions regarding guidance, planning, development, implementation, program revisions, and resources are made.

Practice B

Engages AIG-licensed specialists in tasks that explicitly address the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

District Response: All teachers can attain local endorsement AIG certificates, with the district expectation that all core instruction teachers K-8 will attain through staggered cohorts. With the assistance of AIG Certified Instructional Coaches, all teachers, including the locally endorsed, are responsible for:

- Implementing all six standards of the Alexander County Schools AIG Plan,
- Reviewing and analyzing formative and summative data for all AIG students,
- Differentiating curriculum appropriate for gifted students,
- Creating instructional and coaching targets based on data analysis,
- Collaborating with support staff to meet the cognitive, academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted students,
- Facilitating informal sessions to inform parents of identification process and criteria,
- Examining demographic representation of school,
- Promoting extracurricular opportunities,
- Advocating for gifted learners,
- Participating and documenting AIG student discussion at MTSS as part of decision-making process.

High school teachers include all previous objectives but additionally will:
Develop and discuss with AIG students the opportunities in the AP Academy, Honors Level Courses, Dual Enrollment, etc.
Identifying AIG student course failures and facilitating counseling with support staff.

Practice 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.

District Response: All certified reading and math teachers are required to take the 30 hours of local professional development. Teachers are taken through these courses in cohort groups to establish a partnership with other teachers to function as a professional contact and resource. The district has a process for ensuring all indicated teachers complete these courses by grouping staff into cohorts to complete the courses. The courses are currently assigned to Cohort 4 of the ACS Reading and Math Teachers. In order to ensure all staff are receiving professional development regarding gifted learners, monthly "AIG All Day Everyday" sessions will be held on topics ranging from compacting to emotional wellness. AIG teaching personnel are required to attend two of the eight annual sessions.

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.

District Response: Elementary students demonstrating advanced academic achievement through assessment and observation will be clustered with peers of similar learning capacity in classrooms with teachers who have completed the thirty hours through the local-endorsement AIG Cohort, NWRESA AIG regional-endorsement, or are certified AIG. Students identified as AG, AR, or AM will be clustered or flexibly grouped in core academic areas.

Middle School AIG students will be placed in classrooms with other identified students in at least two core subjects in classrooms with teachers who have completed the thirty hours through the local-endorsement AIG Cohort, NWRESA AIG regional-endorsement, or are certified AIG. Students identified, but not performing to capacity will also meet as a group with a school counselor at least once per month.

High school students are given preferential admission to Honors, Advanced Placement, Capstone Courses, NCVPS, etc. classrooms with teachers who have completed the thirty hours through the local-endorsement AIG Cohort, NWRESA AIG regional-endorsement, or are certified AIG.

Practice E

Aligns professional development opportunities with local AIG program goals, other district initiatives, and best practices in gifted education.

District Response: AIG Professional Development is developed in partnership with Alexander County Schools' Strategic Plan. Strategic Plan Goal: Professional Excellence, Strategy 4 states that "Central office employees and school administrators...offer comprehensive staff development... in the following areas (list is not all inclusive): Differentiation, inclusion, curriculum alignment, Academically or Intellectually Gifted local endorsement..."

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Whereas, further strategies under the same Strategic Plan Goal include writing a professional development plan that supports quality instruction and high achievement. As best practice in gifted education looks at each student and his/her needs, our professional development follows this practice and aligns with MTSS initiative in our system. In order to ensure all staff are receiving professional development regarding gifted learners, monthly "AIG All Day Everyday" sessions will be held on topics ranging from compacting to emotional wellness.

Practice F

Provides opportunities for AIG specialists and other teachers to plan, implement, and refine applications of their professional development learning.

District Response: ACS Cohort Modules are via Google Classroom. This enables a platform for teachers to share their plans, suggestions, and collegial resources with one another. During these cohort modules, teachers are asked to post plans and have online discussions on what worked and what did not. This enables teachers in upcoming cohorts to view the ideas and submit suggestions for problem areas, providing a storehouse of tried and refined, strategies, and units for gifted students.

Ideas for Strengthen the Standard: Revise and update local endorsement for AIG courses
Develop schedule of professional development for school AIG population-specific needs
Additional social and emotional training for teacher

Sources of Evidence: AIG Plan

AIG local endorsement course outlines

AIG Regional-Endorsement Rosters

Alexander County Schools Strategic Plan

Professional Development Rosters

PLC, Committee, and Advisory Agendas, Documentation, and Minutes

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.

Practice 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

District Response: The Director of Advanced Programs met with the parent advisory team of the school with the largest AIG student population. School Improvement Teams with parent representation were also consulted regarding the 2019-2021 AIG Plan. Alexander County Public Education Foundation offers grants for AIG teachers to use to meet AIG student need. Elementary schools in partnership with Lenoir-Rhyne University Visiting Writer Series provide a novel, curriculum, and author meet and greet with book signing. Community groups and business, such as the Lion's Club State Employees Credit Union, give scholarships. CVCC partners with the district to sustain an Early College, Alexander Furniture Academy opened, and Alexander Fire Academy is in the planning stages with a targeted start in 2019. The Apple Festival ensures that each school is provided funds from the event. Community members, business owners, and professionals mentor and partner high school students for Senior Projects.

Practice 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.

District Response: The AIG Plan will be posted on the District AIG Website. Informational PowerPoint(s) will be presented at a Board Meeting, Principal Meeting, Curriculum Team Meeting, Beginning of the Year Meetings, and School Open Houses. The high school options will be presented to eighth grade students before ninth grade registration annually. Offers will be made to present the plan to commissioners, Rotary Clubs, Delta Kappa Gamma meeting, etc. A report on Gifted Education and Students will be presented annually to the Board of Education and Advisory Team.

Practice 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.

District Response: Two AIG Leadership Teams have been developed. The first is in partnership with

the parent advisory team of the school with the largest AIG student population and School Improvement Team with parent representation. In these meetings, The Director of Advanced Programs will discuss core instruction and the role it plays in gifted instruction. The second team is comprised of district-level curriculum and instruction leaders, AIG-licensed teachers, and instructional facilitators. This is called the AIG Advisory Team; this team meets at least quarterly with goal of improving identification practices, targeting underrepresented populations, enhancing gifted education, and the goals of AIG.

Practice D

Informs parents/families and the community of opportunities available to AIG students on an ongoing basis and in their native language.

District Response: Targeted presentations occur to inform parents and families and community of the opportunities, events, and applications for AIG students. Resources are posted on the District AIG Website, and through automated calls. When appropriate, the parent or families native language is used.

Practice 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.

District Response: Alexander County Schools is fortunate to have partnerships between Lenoir-Rhyne University, Duke TIP, CVCC, NCSSM and our early college, high school, middle schools, and elementary schools. Through these partnerships, our students can access LRU Visiting Writers Series, execute special projects, video conferences for challenging material, participate in academic competition, and mentorships.

Ideas for Strengthen the Standard: Publicize AIG Plan information (video, newspaper, phone calls, newsletter, pamphlets, etc.).

Translate the information and forms into Spanish.

Explore relationships with local colleagues and apprenticeship opportunities.

Sources of Evidence: Scholarship Opportunities Page at the high school and early college.

Alexander Early College enrollment of AIG students.

Meeting attendance and agendas.

Presentations (PowerPoint, speaker's notes, social media posts.

Letters of invitation to potential advisory board members.

District AIG website.

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.

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}), which has been approved by the local board of education and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.

District Response: Alexander County Schools has an AIG Plan for 2016-2019 that was written according to the State AIG Standards there were current in 2016; the plan was ACS Board Approved and submitted for review and comment. Alexander County Schools is developing the AIG Plan for 2019-2021 using the updated AIG Standards. The plan is expected to be submitted to the ACS Board of Education at the May or June scheduled meeting for approval. After approval, the AIG Plan for 2019-2021 will be submitted to NCDPI for review and comment.

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.

District Response: The AIG Advisory Team has the responsibility for monitoring the AIG Plan. This group will meet quarterly and includes district-level curriculum and instruction leaders, AIG-licensed teachers, and instructional facilitators. The team will review data and evaluate progress in the AIG Plan, review the AIG Plan, increase parental membership on the team. The team examine the following questions routinely:

What is the AIG population compared to total school population? What is the status of our underrepresented populations?

How are placement decisions made? Are the decisions being made equitably? Are AIG students placed with AIG teachers (locally, regionally, or state-licensed)?

How are schedules for AIG students arranged to support individual needs?

What instructional resources are needed? How will they be implemented, and fidelity of implementation monitored?

How are we ensuring rich AIG professional development for teachers?

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.

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District Response: Alexander County Schools is a strong proponent of transparency and collaboration. As such, the Director of Advanced Program and the Director of Finance ensure that the state funds allocated are spent according to the state policy. The budget is developed and aligned with the District Strategic Plan Standards and AIG Standards. All expenditure decisions are based on student benefit.

Practice D

Maintains, analyzes, and shares student achievement, student growth, and annual drop-out data for AIG students.

District Response: AIG student data (growth, achievement, underrepresented populations, etc.) is shared annually with the ACS Board of Education, district leadership, principals, instructional coaches, and advisory board. This data is analyzed to determine trends and areas of improvement; annual targets can be developed and communicated to staff in order to support AIG resources and instruction.

Practice 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.

District Response: AIG student data is disaggregated annually for underrepresented populations. This data drives the selection of aptitude and achievement test. Additionally, the data drives training and identification processes to target the populations not served, attempts to address this gap by educating teachers, and purposeful selection of non-verbal assessments.

If a student from an underrepresented population listed does not place by pathway, the student will be considered for testing if he/she is from an underrepresented population. Retesting will be done using the NNAT-3 for students needing a non-verbal ability assessment, OLSAT for aptitude, or IOWA for achievement. Tests used in the pathways for identification and placement specifically include non-verbal assessments which, research shows, assist in the identification of underrepresented populations. By pulling current underrepresented AIG student percentages, these are compared to the district student composition of the same populations. This ensures the exact target percentage is known. Particular attention is given to potentially gifted students from culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged, or other challenged populations in the placement process.

Practice F

Maintains current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving AIG students.

District Response: The Director of Advanced Programs maintains records of all state-licensed, locally endorsed, and NWRESA regionally endorsed AIG teachers in the district. Additionally, the

director maintains the cohort schedules for the local-endorsement process for the district. On-going, rich professional development is monitored and developed annually based on Strategic Plan and Professional Development Plan goals. In partnership with the district human resources department, record of professional development of all honors, AP, and Capstone course teachers are monitored.

Practice G

Elicits regular feedback from students, parents/families, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the local AIG program.

District Response: Alexanders County Schools solicits annual feedback from students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders on the AIG Plan and its implementation. Parents are given time for questions and feedback at parent meetings at the beginning of school and transitional meetings. Parents are encouraged to contact the school principal with questions or concerns about implementation. This includes an email address for parents to contact on the district website.

Practice H

Utilizes multiple sources of data to review and revise the local AIG program and plan during comprehensive program evaluation.

District Response: AIG data is collected and analyzed annually. Student data sources include, but are not limited to, EVAAS, state testing, and local assessment data. Teacher data is analyzed to determine best placement for gifted student growth, professional development, attendance, and licensure. Information is analyzed and trends are teased out. This information allows for progress monitoring of the AIG Plan. Sharing this data with stakeholders invites feedback for improvement and review of plan while in cycle, ensuring the plan is reviewed and revised in a systematic method.

Practice I

Disseminates all data from evaluation of the local AIG program to the public.

District Response: Each spring, all releasable data will be presented to the ACS Board of Education in written and face-to-face report, including a question and answer session by the board. Minutes of the meeting are reported county-wide to employees and the local newspaper. The report is posted on the District website. This data is shared with parents, principals, and instructional facilitators at meetings during the school year. Principals disseminate this information to faculty and parent advisory groups.

Practice J

Safeguards the rights of all AIG students and their parents and families through established written

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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.

District Response: In Alexander County Schools, the procedure to resolve disagreements is outlined below and can be found on the District and District AIG website:

If a parent/guardian has dispute with the gifted services within a classroom or with the determination of giftedness, a parent/guardian should meet with the classroom teacher and principal to discuss. If this discussion fails to reveal a solution, the parent/guardian should meet with the principal and Director of Advanced Programs.

If the parent/guardian after the aforementioned meetings continues to have dispute regarding gifted services within a classroom or with the determination of gifted need, the parent/guardian should follow the ACS BOE Policy 1740/4010 Student and Parent Grievance Procedure as found on the district website or can be proved by the school principal.

The following are excerpts from Policy 1740/4010 Student and Parent Grievance Procedure. The entire policy should be referenced in the event of a grievance.

"The Alexander County Board of Education strives to resolve concerns and complaints of students and parents whenever possible. To this end, the board has provided opportunities for students and parents to express their concern through processes established in board policies. Policy 1742/5060, Responding to Complaints, identifies these different processes, including a mechanism for resolving complaints in an informal manner.

While the board encourages resolutions of complaints through informal means, it recognizes that, at times, a formal process may be necessary for certain types of complaints or if the informal process did not produce satisfactory results. This policy provides a complaint procedure that may be used as described [in the ACS BOE Policy Manual]."

Regarding consent to test, parents will sign consent for evaluation prior to testing. This must be done prior to a student being tested. There may be need for further assessment and nationally normed tests may be administered more than one time, but not more than once within a two-year period. Prior approval is required from parents for all testing except for the initial screening in third (previous AIG Plan) or fourth grade (current AIG Plan) and all district-wide or grade-wide assessments. Consent for testing form can be found on the AIG website.

Ideas for Strengthen the Standard: Add student representation to committees or advisory.
Exit surveys or interviews with student drop-out (if possible).
Annual data targets/goals for underrepresented population growth.

Sources of Evidence: Meeting agendas and minutes
Survey results and parent and/or community feedback
Data presentations

Plan revisions, updates, or evaluations
AIG Professional Development Plan and AIG Budget links to District Strategic Plan

Glossary (optional):

Appendix (optional):

AIG Pathways.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
AIG Test List and Usage.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Alexander County Schools AIG Referral Form.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Grade-level Screener AIG Identification Flowchart.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
K-3 Identification Flowchart.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Permission to test letter and signature page.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Screening and Eligibility Form.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Student Characteristics Rating Scale.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Sample Service Options.docx (*Appendix - Standard 2*)
Service Menus.docx (*Appendix - Standard 2*)
Differentiated Instruction Choice Chart.docx (*Appendix - Standard 3*)
AIG PD Plan.docx (*Appendix - Standard 4:6*)
AIG Agenda Template.docx (*Appendix - Standard 5*)
DEP Timeline Expectations.docx (*Appendix - Standard 6*)
Board Approval Letter.pdf (*Local Board Approval Document*)