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

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Macon 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 to 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, Macon County Schools local AIG plan is as follows:

Macon County Schools Vision for local AIG program: Macon County Schools will provide support and opportunities that assist gifted students in exploring and reaching their potential to become successful within the 21st century. We believe that all children have the right to an education proportionate with their learning abilities. Gifted children perform or show potential for performing at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. We believe that gifted characteristics are present in children from all cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and require services that support their social, emotional, and cognitive needs. These students require differentiated services beyond those that are provided in the regular education program in order to achieve their highest potential. It is the responsibility of the entire Macon County School System staff to meet the needs of gifted learners through individualized differentiated instruction.

Goals of the Macon County Schools AIG Program:
• To provide learning experiences that address the academic, intellectual, and social needs of gifted students
• To development independent and self directed learners who generate questions, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information and ideas
• To provide students with enrichment programs that expand their knowledge and afford opportunities to develop and demonstrate gifted behaviors.

• To provide on-going professional development to teachers of gifted students.

• To promote positive attitudes regarding gifted education through communication and collaboration among school staff, parents, and the community.

**Sources of funding for local AIG program (as of 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: Macon County Schools has a clearly articulated and implemented system for identification of AIG students. This system spans all grade levels and is designed to include children from underrepresented populations and underachieving gifted students. Building level administrators each have a written copy of the screening and identification process. In addition, AIG specialists communicate with teachers and counselors in grades K-8 regarding the process and timeline(s) for making referrals. The information can be found in the AIG Handbook that is posted on the Macon County Schools AIG website so that parents and teachers can access it at any time. Parents are notified of screening efforts by written and verbal communication. Information about this process will be discussed at beginning of the year faculty meetings and shared in a quarterly newsletter.

Kindergarten-Second Grades
If a kindergarten, first or second grade student is identified as gifted in any capacity in another school or district, gifted identification will remain the same in MCS. No further testing is required. An Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) will be developed for gifted kindergartners, first and second graders and AIG Teachers will work collaboratively with classroom teachers and parents to determine how to best meet social, emotional, and academic needs.

If a student in kindergarten, first, or second grade is achieving at a remarkable rate, the parent, teacher and/or building administrator will bring a referral to the AIG director. At that time an informal (rating scale) and formal screening opportunity (Naglieri) will be given in order to determine if the student meets criteria for AIG placement.

Third Grade Screening Process
MCS conducts a universal screening for all third grade students primarily educated within a general education setting. The screening utilizes multiple criteria to create a comprehensive student profile. Each third grade student is provided with one formal opportunity via the Naglieri (NNAT), a nationally normed abilities test, and one informal opportunity an observational checklist. Other formal and informal assessment opportunities are available if students meet certain criteria, including the Iowa Assessments, a nationally-normed achievement assessment in reading and math, and a portfolio consisting of student work samples.

Fourth-Twelfth Grades
Parents, guardians, students, counselors, teachers, and other stakeholders may refer students to be screened for grade acceleration.
Committee, which is comprised of an administrator, AIG Teacher, classroom teacher, and other relevant staff members. All decisions for testing for gifted identification outside of the district-wide third grade screening process are made by AIG Site-Based Committees. Students may be considered for rescreening by the district after a period of at least 12 months has passed. The MCS Gifted Identification Rubric is used to determine gifted eligibility. Data pieces for screening these grades will include percentile scores on the EOG/C, grades, and gifted rating scale.

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: Multiple eligibility criteria lead to service options in reading and/or math. In grades K-3, students may be referred for consultative nurturing and enrichment services based on BOG percentile, reading levels and grades with formal services beginning in the fourth grade. In grades 4-8, students may be eligible for Academically and Intellectually Gifted services. In grades 9-12 Macon County Schools (MCS) practice open registration; options include Advanced Placement, honors courses, online advanced high school courses and college level courses. Identification criteria for these students would be grades, EOC percentile scores and gifted rating scales.

MCS publish an AIG Service Eligibility chart that defines AIG eligibility criteria based on aptitude and achievement results at various grade levels. Student eligibility criteria are based on identification pathways that employ a variety of evaluation instruments, including the CogAT, Naglieri, Wechsler Intelligence Scales, Test of Cognitive Skills, and other aptitude measures in combination with the Iowa, Terra Nova, Woodcock-Johnson, EOG, and other achievement measures. Below is the pathway as outlined by MCS:

Academically/Intellectually Gifted (AIG):
Students who score between the 92nd and 99th percentile on an aptitude test; score between the 94th and 99th percentile on an achievement assessment; and attain grades of B's or higher will be identified as Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG). These students are eligible to receive AIG services and will also have a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) for support.

Intellectually Gifted (AI)
An additional area of identification recognized by Macon County Schools is Intellectually Gifted or IG. Students in grades 3rd-12th who obtain identification based solely from their aptitude score (96% or higher) will be identified IG. MCS believes that students qualifying under the category of IG demonstrate high ability but need additional support in their academic achievement within the classroom. Other categories of identification recognized by Macon County Schools include Academically and Intellectually Gifted Reading (AR), Academically and Intellectually Gifted Math
(AM), and Academically Intellectually Gifted (AI). Students may qualify in math, reading or both.

Screening Processes:
MCS screen all third grade students at the end of the school year using the NNAT; a follow-up achievement screening (typically End-of Grade assessments) will be reviewed for those students based on a minimum of a 92nd percentile aptitude. Parents/families are notified about eligibility by late spring of third grade and may opt in or out of services that begin in fourth grade. Opportunities for rescreening are available in subsequent grades including those based on nominations and end of grade results. Traditional measures for identification include the CogAT 7 and the NNAT with rescreen options including the OLSAT or the TCS-2. We also accept a variety of independent evaluations provided by licensed psychologists. For an independent evaluation to be accepted in aptitude or achievement, a student must have scored in the 75th percentile or above on the corresponding group test.

MCS accepts the following Aptitude Evaluations:

Individually Administered Assessments of Aptitude/Intelligence (score of 92-99 percentile):
- DAS (Differential Abilities Scales-2nded.)
- K-ABC-II (Kaufman Aptitude Battery for Children-2nd ed.)
- Stanford-Binet V (minimum of six subtests)
- WISC-V (Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children-5th ed.)
- WAIS-IV (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scales – 4th ed.) (16 years of age or older)

MCS 2016-2019 Local AIG Plan Group Administered Assessments of Aptitude/Intelligence (score of 92-99 percentile):
- CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test)
- NNAT (Naiglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test)
- OLSAT (Otis Lennon Scholastic Ability Test)
- TCS-2(Test of Cognitive Skills)

MCS accepts the following Achievement Evaluations (score of 95 – 99 percentile):
- SAT (Stanford Achievement Test)
- CAT-V (California Achievement Test, 5th ed.)
- ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills)
- KTEA –II
- Terra Nova-3
- WJ-IV (Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery- 4th ed.)
- KTEA-III

Note: Achievement Evaluations must include administration of reading, math and language mechanics components to be used in AIG eligibility assessment.

EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS NOT ACCEPTED:
• PPVT (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test)
• PIAT (Peabody Individual Achievement Test)
• WRAT (Wide-Range Achievement Test)
• K-BIT (Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test)
• Slossen Aptitude Test
• ERB/CTP tests of achievement

**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:** Identification and placement of children into the AIG program is based on multiple criteria which includes aptitude, achievement, and performance. A wide range of assessment options are utilized to include children with cultural and language diversity, the economically disadvantaged, those among disabled populations, and those who are underachieving. Careful consideration of all factors helps to determine if a student qualifies and the appropriate level of services and supports.

Strategies included in the identification of under-served populations include:
* Nonverbal aptitude assessments
* Identification of characteristics of giftedness beyond typical high academic performance
* Training for teachers of characteristics of giftedness including those that are often behaviors that are not considered "teacher pleasing"
* Student and parental interviews
* Performance assessments
* Individualized testing of students

Macon County Board of Education recognizes that under representation of special populations of gifted students in gifted programs exists. In an effort to identify and implement gifted programs with improved representation, participation and performance of special populations, Macon County Schools will: consider the special populations within our community (such as ELL, EC students); review the methods utilized to identify students for services; assess the types of services offered in light of research addressing underserved populations; and determine what modifications may need to be made in light of current demographics and community expectations. Teachers of academically gifted students will work closely with teachers of English language learners and students with disabilities to identify students demonstrating advanced cognitive skills, ability to grasp and manipulate sophisticated and abstract concepts at an early age, unusually strong motivation and persistence, and advanced comprehension of information and ideas. Staff development will be provided to assist teachers in providing activities that will support affective and cognitive growth, especially in the primary grades.

Guiding principles for the inclusion of high potential students from special populations in gifted and talents programs are taken from Designing Services and Programs for High Ability Learners (Purcell
These principles will guide Macon County Schools in addressing the issue of under representation and are as follows:

- A broad range (e.g., academic, artistic, creative, leadership) and level of talents (e.g., latent, emergent, and novice) exists across all populations of students.
- Special populations of gifted students include those who (1) have multiple exceptionalities (e.g., learning disabled) and (2) are culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse (CLED).
- Most of the old rules and traditional methods for defining, identifying, and serving underrepresented gifted and talented students in special populations do not work.
- Adaptations must be made in local and state curriculum standards and gifted program guidelines and regulations to enable more flexible identification procedures.
- Gifted program curriculum, instruction, and services must be tailored and modified to meet the unique profile of students from special populations.
- Both affective (social and emotional) and academic needs of students should be considered when developing programming options.
- The way in which school districts identify and nurture student gifts and talents affect whether student potential is latent, emergent, or fully realized.
- Attempts must be made to develop a broad range of choices and services to enable the diverse group of special population students to develop their academic, artistic, creative, and leadership talents or potential talents during and after the school day as well as at other times of the year.
- Regular opportunities must exist to evaluate the identification of and provision of services for students with talents and gifts from special population groups.
- Parents of gifted students or high-potential children from special populations must be invited and encouraged to actively participate in the process of their children's talent development.
- Program evaluation practices should enable changes to occur that support successful program participation of CLED students and those with special needs.

Macon County Schools provide guidance and counseling services at all eleven schools within the system. It is recognized that gifted students have a variety of social and emotional learning needs that must be met in order to maximize their potential. These needs are being met through a continuum of services ranging from in class guidance activities, small group activities, and parent meetings/focus groups. At the elementary level, counselors provide classroom guidance which addresses issues across the guidance curriculum, including those related to affective and emotional areas, peer and social interactions, character education, and career counseling. Additionally, focus groups are available as needed within in all schools.

**Practice D**

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

**District Response:** To ensure fidelity throughout the district regarding the implementation of screening, referral, and identification processes, as outlines in the Local AIG Plan 2019-2022, a standardized training is used throughout MCS to ensure the consistent delivery of the AIG Plan. Trainings are delivered annually to all school administration, AIG specialists, and teachers. The trainings take place prior to September 30th each school year.
The handbook (attached) outlines the policies and procedures that govern the program. AIG Specialists are well versed in the procedures and support administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents when there are questions.

AIG paperwork aligns the process for screening, referral, and identification. Every school, K-12, in the district utilizes the same paperwork and documentation. Each school maintains a student folder to house the AIG paperwork at the school level. Audits are completed at the end of each school year to make sure that AIG folders are maintained and show evidence of AIG signed identification and DEP’s.

Identification and Placement
Placement into the AIG program within Macon County Schools is based on multiple criteria, and students will not be excluded from the program on the basis of any single criteria. The placement process will identify students for differing levels of service within the program. An AIG Committee made up of the school principal or assistant principal, counselor, AIG Specialist, regular education teachers, and/or support personnel evaluates student data and determines if the district criteria for AIG identification is met. AIG Committee members utilize the Rubric for Placement in the MCS AIG Program during evaluation. Placement into the program is based on three out of three areas falling into the high to extremely high range.

The three areas that are considered in the eligibility process are:
• Academic Achievement
  94% or higher on a standardized test (EOG)
• Aptitude
  92% or higher on a standardized aptitude test (NNAT)
• Performance
  Classroom grades or subtest of a standardized achievement or aptitude test

Following the collection of data, the AIG Committee will review the students identified and begin to determine the level of differentiation needed for each individual student. Information may be considered inadequate for some students, and the committee may recommend either further assessment or that the student does not require differentiated services. Students may be placed on a "watch" list so that the student may be nurtured and considered for identification at a later time. If additional assessments are desired, parental permission will be obtained.

The AIG Committee may also recommend individualized assessments which are sensitive to economic conditions, gender, developmental differences, learning differences, and diversity of students so that equal opportunity for consideration is provided. The AIG Committee decision shall be documented, and parents notified of the recommended services. Documentation of parental involvement is required for placement in any service delivery options.

**Practice E**
Disseminates information regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes to school personnel, parents/families, students, and the community-at-large.
**District Response:** Macon County Schools sends out a letter to all parents of third grade students explaining the screening process. After screening, each parent will receive the screening results (in written format) and next steps, if appropriate. The general process is described in the AIG handbook and is published on the MCS website.

**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:** Each identified AIG student has a DEP kept on file. This document is reviewed and updated annually by teachers, parents, administrators, and AIG personnel. DEPs are reflective of the service options available at each school level (elementary, intermediate, middle, and high school).
Our district has a strong physical systems in place (PowerSchool) to document a student's AIG identification process and evidence which leads to an identification decision. We will continue maintaining physical student files with documentation from screening processes, including test scores and referral and results forms.

Parents are provided with information about the identification process and their student's results after each part of the identification process. Consistency in communication is maintained across the district through the use of district-generated form letters for each part of the identification process. Individual student results and next steps are added to the form letters by AIG Teachers and provided to parents. Students and parents are encouraged to contact the AIG Teacher with additional questions about the process and/or results. After the identification process is complete, a DEP meeting is held for parents of newly identified students.

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:** Continue using the NNAT in order to determine its effectiveness in identifying gifted children within Macon County's student population.

**Sources of Evidence:** Student Files
Macon County Schools AIG Handbook
Differentiated Education Plans
Aptitude Test Results
Student Achievement Data
Eligibility and Placement Record
Communications to Parents and Teachers
Newsletters
Documentation of training
Student portfolios
AIG Forms available in Spanish
MCS AIG Website
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: Macon County Schools offers a continuum of services to address the unique needs of gifted learners in grades kindergarten through twelve. These services are accessible to all AIG identified students in the district based on student need. The following program service options are available:

• Cluster grouping
• Content acceleration
• Grade acceleration
• Pull-out enrichment
• Independent study
• Online courses
• Dual Enrollment
• Honors courses
• Advanced Placement courses
• Summer Programs
• Extra-curricular opportunities

Each school year regular education teachers will collaborate with AIG Specialists to complete a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) for identified gifted students. The DEP will outline the program service options appropriate for the student's grade level. Generally, students will receive in-class differentiation in the area(s) of identification with the support, both directly and indirectly, of the AIG Specialist. Students may also receive enrichment through a pull-out program with the AIG Specialist. Enrichment opportunities provided by the AIG Specialist may include Battle of the Books, Invention Convention, Young Authors, and Odyssey of the Mind.

During grades five and six, gifted and high achieving students may choose to participate in the Advanced Program at Mountain View Intermediate School. This program focuses on content acceleration and project based learning to enhance the North Carolina State Standards. Teachers in the program specialize in working with gifted students and receive on-going training in the field of gifted education.
In grades seven and eight, gifted students may take advanced language arts and mathematics courses. Upon teacher recommendation, Math I is offered to advanced students during eighth grade for high school credit.

All high school students identified as AIG will have a DEP included in the information transferred from middle school. A Four-Year Plan indicating their proposed secondary course of study will be attached to the DEP. Honors, AP, online, and college courses are available to AIG students during these years. Course selection in high school should match the students' needs and is determined collaboratively by the student, the parent, the school administration, and the high school guidance counselor or AIG Specialist.

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

**District Response:** AIG program and services are aligned with the goal of our local program and take in to consideration the needs of the student based on area of identification. Activities and learning opportunities fall within the scope of the resources of Macon County Schools. AIG support is available at all schools for students and in a consultative manner to regular education teachers. Resources are used for materials, activities, and opportunities for enrichment and advanced learning and for training for staff in areas of differentiation. Classes for advancement and increased rigor are available at intermediate, middle, and high school levels. Our students are encouraged to enroll in these classes based on the specific areas of giftedness identified.

Classes are available at the middle school and high school for honors and advanced placement in language arts and math, as well as other areas at the high school level. In addition, high school students are able to participate in dual enrollment courses and online courses. Math I is currently offered to gifted and high achieving students at the middle school level. Additionally, there will be the option for English I, World History, World Languages and Earth Science to be taken for high school credit. AIG students in grades 5 and 6 have the option for block grouping for language arts, social studies, science, and math which has opened the door for them to be successful as they advance through these higher level courses while in middle school.

At the grade 4 level, the alignment of the enrichment activities and the State Standards will facilitate an increased depth of exploration and understanding of the curriculum in specific areas of giftedness and interest. The implementation of the MTSS process at all elementary schools offers a natural process for escalating levels of challenge and exploration for advanced learners at an early age, and covers a wide range of topics for learning.

**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:** District wide professional development emphasis is in areas of assisting all
teachers with understanding the essential standards, learning multi modal avenues of instructing that meets the needs of diverse learners within the classroom, and making instructional decisions on data (benchmark assessments). As a result, AIG students should have more opportunities to opt out of repetitious activities related to concepts already mastered and move forward into more in depth learning experiences.

In addition, administrators have received training and consultation in developing schedules that take into account the varying levels of student achievement and allow for remediation for low performing students, and acceleration and enrichment for advanced learners. The Board of Education and leadership team for Macon County Schools believe that technology is essential to 21st Century Learning and have made a commitment to provide resources within the classroom to reach this goal. Access to technology and instruction in its use is an essential component of integrating AIG programs and services into the district as a whole.

Using multiple criteria and data points to guide instruction for students is a core component of instructional planning and practice in Macon County Schools. The Accountability Department along with curriculum directors supports the use of data to intentionally create flexible groups to provide appropriate instruction for students in all subject areas and grade levels.

Cluster grouping and flexible grouping are a part of the model used at the elementary level. Cluster grouping is a research-based practice for gifted students. A gifted cluster is a group of gifted and/or high-ability students placed within a mixed-ability classroom. This allows for ongoing, consistent differentiation to occur within classrooms. AIG Teachers provide support to both teachers and students in this structure. Flexible grouping is also encouraged with the use of data (performance grades and achievement) to support formation of groups. Groups may be created based on a variety of criteria, according to student interest, mastery level, learner profile, and may change based on current standards or units of study. These groups are formed by the AIG specialists.

At the secondary level, students are grouped according to course selection and course placement. Our department has worked with the district's Office of Accountability to develop data systems to gauge potential for success in enrollment in AP courses and Math 1. These data systems provide guidance to counselors, administrators and master schedulers to ensure students are enrolled in appropriately challenging courses to engage in rigorous content to maximize potential. Middle schools and high schools utilize multiple data points, including gifted identification, course selection, grades, and achievement data to make course placement recommendations and decisions.

Groups of students within advanced courses in middle school and high school are supported directly by classroom teachers. The AIG department will continue to develop and provide targeted professional development opportunities for teachers, counselors and administrators to support them with data use and grouping practices at the secondary level. As target areas for growth in this practice, the department will focus on designing measures of consistency and accountability for grouping procedures and practices based on the comprehensive needs of students. In addition, we will focus on analyzing current AIG student achievement and growth data to inform grouping practices and procedures at the school and district level.

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:** Communication is an essential component to the success of the AIG program. Efforts are made by AIG staff to keep teachers, administrators, and support staff up to date with regard to differentiated instruction and policies and procedures related to the program. While our communication needs to be more structured, consistent, and purposeful the relationships among AIG staff and school level staff are positive and supportive. Most information is shared in informal settings on an as needed basis.

The program director talks with the district leadership team and building level administrators during regularly scheduled meetings as part of district wide departmental updates. At the beginning of each year there is an overview and update regarding policies and procedures at each school. Additionally, administrators are invited to participate as part of the stakeholder review team.

AIG Specialists work with grade level teachers at the school level to implement the screening and identification process each year. They also meet both individually and with groups of teachers to develop and support the implementation of ideas for differentiation of the content and the learning environment for gifted students. AIG Specialists also work with teachers in developing enrichment opportunities for students in alignment with the State Standards.

**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:** Transition times for students are a pivotal part of the educational process. We strive to maintain open and ongoing communication regarding student services and needs as they move from grade to grade. We are especially mindful of the importance of planned transition between schools at those critical points in time.

The AIG Specialists provide information to teachers at the beginning of each year regarding the AIG students that are enrolled in their classrooms. The elementary AIG specialist meets with the intermediate AIG teachers to review information regarding the students transitioning to that level. Recommendations are made regarding level of services and insight is given into unique learning and social issues of specific students. AIG Specialists at the intermediate level recommend gifted students’ class placement at the middle school level. Also, an informational meeting is held at key transition points to inform parents about services the next level of their child's education.

**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: Increasing awareness of the special social and emotional needs that the AIG students have is an ongoing effort within the AIG program. School counselors are available at each school to work collaboratively with AIG Specialists in identifying students that are struggling with issues in this area and develop plans to assist them. Macon County Schools also strives to help teachers understand more about characteristics of giftedness and how these can be manifested in social and emotional areas.

AIG specialists are essential in working with parents and other school staff in identifying issues related to meeting the social and emotional needs of AIG students. Students have access to counseling and support, social skills training groups and problem solving skills building. School staff monitor for situations that indicate a need that should be addressed with an individual student or with groups of students. Counselors provide regular guidance activities that also focus on social and emotional issues.

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: When various data suggests that a student needs individualized acceleration in specific areas there are several options:
* Skipping grade(s)
* Participating in specific content areas and advanced class
* Online courses and instruction
* Acceleration to complete high school classes while in middle school
* Dual enrollment
* Credit by Demonstrated Mastery

The need for acceleration and the appropriate means for acceleration are determined by a team consisting of school personnel, the student, and the parents. Students that would be good candidates for acceleration are typically identified by classroom teachers. Parents may also request a student be considered for acceleration. The school based team reviews student data including any standardized test scores, past performance, and current classroom performance. Additional data may be requested and could include individualized intelligence test, standardized achievement test, and curriculum based assessment in a particular subject area. The committee reviews all aspects of the student including social and emotional status, motivation, ability to work independently, and other pertinent factors. The committee then makes a determination of an appropriate plan for acceleration and identifies resources and personnel needed for implementation.

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:** Currently we do not have multiple strategies in place to provide intentional services to AIG students in underrepresented populations. While tests are utilized to identify these under-represented populations, there is no specific additional programming in place for those students. AIG staff consults with teachers of ESL and twice exceptional students in order to better understand their unique learning needs. We want to continue to aggressively seek out ways to find and nurture talent in our underrepresented populations while simultaneously working to more intentionally and appropriately serve this group. MCS is will be putting in place a nurturing program by using the Slocumb Payne Learner Profile. This profile indicates students that demonstrate a strong potential for characteristics that are common to that of a gifted learner. We will be looking for students that show the potential to demonstrate learning behaviors of a student that is gifted. These behaviors will then be nurtured through over the 2nd grade year through programs such as Jacob's Ladder and PETS.

The MCS AIG department provides all elementary schools with a licensed AIG teacher. AIG teachers and classroom teachers use multiple data sources, formal and informal, to meet the advanced learning needs of students throughout the school. Currently, schools vary in the number of gifted identified students that attend. Intentional training opportunities are being provided on finding and serving underrepresented gifted students for AIG teachers who serve schools with fewer gifted students and larger underrepresented populations. In addition, we are building on the success of our EL partnership for finding and serving gifted EL students to increase access for other underrepresented groups. This partnership consists of RE teachers, AIG teachers and ESL teachers working together to recommend the screening for the EL population. The changes to our identification procedures directly support this effort by expanding the ranges for aptitude and achievement results to provide more students, primarily those in underrepresented groups, access to demonstrate gifted traits and characteristics through authentic work samples within the portfolio identification process.

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

**District Response:** Macon County Schools personnel recognizes the importance of experiential learning for AIG students. We work to provide opportunities for a variety of extra-curricular experiences as part of the AIG program, and to provide information and encourage participation in events and activities outside of Macon County Schools.

As part of the structure of the AIG program the AIG students have access to a variety of extracurricular events and opportunities. We sponsor events such as:
- Science Olympiad
- Envirothon
- Odyssey of the Mind
- National History Day
- Technology Student Association
• Poetry Out Load (HS only)
• State Mathematics Contest (HS only)
• Tarheel Forensic League (HS only)
• MATHCOUNTS (MS only)
• Battle of the Books (MS only)
• Robotics
• The Invention Convention (Elementary School only)
• AIG STEM Academy
• Future Business Leaders of America (HS and MS School)

Students participate in math, science and foreign language competitions at Western Carolina University. When funding allows, we offer summer institutes for AIG students with opportunities for exploration in several areas of interest including local culture and history, technology, science, and literature. Information regarding opportunities outside of the school system is disseminated to families as it is received. These include SUPER Saturday at UNC Asheville, summer camps for gifted children, summer programs at Western Carolina University, Duke TiPS and Governor's School.

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:** newsletters, an informational handout to be discussed at each faculty meeting at the start of each school year, and opportunities for book studies that address issues related to gifted education will be implemented.

Develop intentional programs for under-represented AIG populations. The AIG Coordinator will research and explore methods implemented by surrounding counties who are effectively meeting this goal.

**Sources of Evidence:** Macon County Schools AIG Handbook
Enrichment Opportunity Flyers/Documents
Differentiated Education Plans
Schedule and class rosters to show block scheduling of AIG students into advanced ELA and math classes.
Completion of advanced course at middle and high school levels
Letters, newsletters and media reports of quarterly county wide Advanced Learning Experiential Learning Opportunities
Teacher reports of social activities that are developed and implemented
Agendas and reports from enrichment activities
Progress monitoring and portfolios from MTSS enrichment groups
Documentation of professional development
Agenda from administrative meetings
Copy of Information handout to be shared at faculty meetings
Newsletters
Written information given to parents
Written plan for transition to high school
Written plan for sharing information at other transition points
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: The elementary, intermediate, and middle school levels provide a framework for adapting the state standards to meet the learning needs of all students, including those of the gifted student. With the use of these tools, AIG students have opportunities to be engaged in North Carolina Standard Course of Study at the pace and depth that is appropriate for their learning levels. By grouping students together in core content areas based on skill mastery, teachers are able to provide curriculum compaction and acceleration, and incorporate critical thinking skills, higher order thinking skills, technology, Project Based Learning (PBL), and creativity while covering the state standards.

Ensuring that the state standards are adapted appropriately for AIG students takes place in a variety of ways.

At the elementary level, the MTSS process allows students who master skills quickly to be moved onto more difficult content, to spend time exploring concepts in more depth, and to incorporate creativity and critical thinking into the standards.

At the fourth grade level, gifted students participate in a program tailored towards the state standards and LEA goals. AIG Specialists collaborate with regular education teachers in planning and implementing assignments appropriate for identified gifted students. These assignments are aligned with essential standards in the core content areas, and will culminate each grading period with an off campus advanced learning experiential opportunity. Contracts and portfolios are utilized to gage the level of each student's participation. The AIG Specialist works with the regular education teachers to ensure that appropriate differentiation occurs.

In grades five and six, a specialized program exists for gifted students, taught by AIG Specialists. This program is designed for gifted and high achieving students, in order to ensure that their emotional, social, and educational needs are being met. The focus of the program is acceleration of curriculum and enrichment for students through the use of Project Based Learning tied to state standard objectives. AIG Specialists also serve as an in-class differentiation specialist working closely with the regular education teacher to ensure that rigorous and relevant instruction is occurring for gifted students who chose not to be involved in the program.

At the seventh and eighth grade level, students will be in an advanced language arts and/or math classes that move at an accelerated pace, resulting in student completion of Math 1 while in middle school. Within the next 3 years Macon County Schools' goal is to also make English 1, World History, World Languages and Earth Science available at the middle school level in order to gain high school
credit. In addition, the state standards will be adapted to allow for exploration, research and more in depth study of objectives with support from the AIG Specialist.

At the high school level the students are exposed to adapted curriculum by participating in Honors and AP courses, dual enrollment and online courses.

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: Direct interaction in academic setting from AIG Specialists allows student access to diverse and effective instructional practices. Ensuring that regular education teachers are providing an appropriate level of differentiation in the classroom is challenging. Many gifted students are given extra work rather than accelerated, exploratory, and enriching activities in the classroom setting. Macon County Schools will provide workshops for the regular education teachers focused on the topic of differentiation strategies for gifted learners.

The following strategies are employed to make sure that students are placed in classrooms that have diverse and effective instructional practices specific to their advanced learning needs:
- Cluster grouping of students for enrichment activities that are tied to the state standards
- Quarterly assigned differentiation activities supported by the AIG Specialists that are aligned both with state standards and experiential learning opportunities
- Block grouping in grades 5 and 6 with AIG Specialists as teachers
- Acceleration and advanced courses in middle grades and high school
- Ongoing training and support for regular classroom teachers
- Differentiation strategies that teachers can quickly access and easily implement

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

District Response: AIG Specialists are currently using Project/Problem Based learning (PBL) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strategies within their classrooms to enrich curriculum and engage students. Macon County Schools and AIG Specialists will continue to explore research-based supplemental resources and offer professional development opportunities about these strategies to all teachers of gifted students.

The Macon County Schools AIG department currently offers a variety of curricular resources to support differentiation for all content-areas at all levels, K-12. The resources provided by the AIG Department are available at all schools across the district. Implementation support is provided by professional development and collaboration. Professional development is designed or provided for each curriculum component purchased and shared with appropriate stakeholders. AIG Teachers and classroom teachers incorporate these resources to enhance student learning. Curriculum resources currently offered for gifted and advanced students include: Center for the Gifted Math, Literacy,
Science and Social Studies Concept-Based Units, Novel Studies to support unit implementation, Project-Based Units of Study, Junior Great Books, chess and robotics kits, logic and reasoning games, AP exam preparation, and Jacob’s Ladder.

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

**District Response:** The vision for Macon County Schools includes challenging all students to achieve their full academic potential to become successful in the 21st century. This district focus emphasizes the use of purposeful activities and opportunities for learning 21st century skills, which are incorporated into the instructional day. Macon County Schools utilizes technology in all capacities available. Students are encouraged to apply skills and knowledge in real world problem solving situations. These practices are implemented across all grade levels in each school.

Strategies for teaching 21st century skills include:
- Problem and Project Based learning
- PowerPoint presentations on global issues
- Summer institutes with focus on social studies, science, and problem solving
- AP and Honors classes
- Use of technology to communicate with people in other cultures/nations
- Research based projects
- STEM Exploration through Robotics
- iPad technology

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

**District Response:** Macon County Schools implements formative and summative assessments to help determine student mastery of skills and plan instruction based on student needs for acceleration and implementation of rigorous instruction and assignments.

Teachers utilize on-going assessments within their own classrooms. Summative assessments are given regularly and the results are analyzed to provide teachers with information that is used to group students for remediation and acceleration. This information gives teachers the data to make informed decisions regarding appropriate instructional planning for each student and facilitates differentiation.

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

**District Response:** At the intermediate level, gifted students are cluster grouped into a single block with AIG Specialists as their core teachers. This programming allows for their social and emotional needs to be addressed on a daily basis by teachers who are educated on their specific and unique needs.

At the middle and high school level, gifted students are cluster grouped based on their advanced/honor class choices. However, teachers would benefit from professional development on the topic of social and emotional needs of gifted students.

Affective curriculum and instructional practices are provided to schools to address the social and emotional needs of AIG students. This includes Growth Mindset materials in order for teachers to incorporate strategies for building growth mindset in their day to day instruction with students; Differentiated Education Plans at the secondary level now can incorporate the need for setting goals in the social and emotional area for gifted learners; MTSS is used to document behavioral needs of students and can be used for the gifted learner. This system of support provides layers of intervention as defined by the intensity of the behavior; and Slocumb-Payne Gifted Identification Learner Profile is available to all schools. This learner profile helps school staff identify not only positive behaviors of a gifted learner but also understand how gifted qualities can sometimes manifest in a negative way. As a district, we are moving toward a more strategic, district-wide approach to support the social and emotional needs of all students. In partnership with the district, the AIG department will provide input on the development of the district approach to ensure it is inclusive of the social and emotional needs of gifted and advanced students.

In addition, professional development and curriculum resources, for teachers, parents and students, provide basic information on ways to support AIG students’ social and emotional needs. Examples of the curriculum resources and professional development provided to support social and emotional learning include district created K-2 nurturing units and district created K-12 vertical team resources. Through partnership with the counseling department, we will provide professional development and resources for counselors on social and emotional needs of gifted students.

In addition, partnerships with Accountability Department to provide linkage reports, linking PSAT, ACT, SAT, and other data points to help make appropriate course recommendations.

Data is used to identify AIG students who are in need of additional support. The district's Early Warning Indicator report is used to identify students who are at risk for underachievement or dropping out. In addition, partnerships with Accountability Department to provide linkage reports, linking PSAT, ACT, SAT, and other data points to help make appropriate course recommendations.

As an area of continued growth in this practice, we will work with the counseling department and media services department to develop and share high school specific resources with multiple staff members in high schools: counselors, AP teachers, and Media Specialists.
Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students through purposeful and intentional differentiated curriculum and instruction.

**District Response:** The MTSS approach used at the elementary level provides a framework for nurturing activities in young students. This process allows for early identification of advanced learners and students with potential giftedness. MTSS provides differentiated curriculum, in-depth study, and creative and critical thinking experiences. In addition, consultation with AIG Specialists supports teachers of young students to better recognize characteristics of giftedness. For those that are particularly high achieving, individualized plans for acceleration and enrichment are developed.

Strategies utilized to have a strong nurturing program include:

- Supporting teachers in early identification of students with characteristics of giftedness
- Encouraging use of USTARS to assist teachers in differentiation for young students
- Consulting with teachers working with the advanced learner groups in the MTSS process so that students have stronger enrichment activities that tap into creative and critical thinking

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

**District Response:** As evidenced through data collected via stakeholder surveys, collaboration between AIG Specialists and other professional staff has become a weakness in the Macon County School AIG Program. Currently there is little communication between AIG Specialists and other professional staff. Therefore, bi-annual meetings are being established as a way to address this deficiency. Teachers, AIG Specialists, County Office Employees, and Administrators will compose a team that will be tasked with developing and implementing differentiated curriculum and instruction. Another goal of this team is to further open the lines of communication between professionals at each school level in order to improve AIG programming across the county.

**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:** Macon County Schools follow the AIG plan and outlined procedures to insure that each student has a differentiated education plan that is kept in his or her AIG file. Annual review of the plan is coordinated by AIG Specialists and helps to make sure student needs are being met and areas of concern are being addressed.

Upon placement into the AIG program, a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) is developed for each child. The DEP is discussed with students, parents, and staff each year the student is in the Macon County School system. In cases where a child struggles to meet academic expectations, an
intervention plan is developed by a team and reviewed frequently. For those students who are progressing, the DEP is reviewed at the end of each school year and plans for the coming year are discussed. During transition years, parents are given written information about what to expect in the coming years and are invited to meetings specifically for gifted students at the new school with the administrators.

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:** The AIG Specialists provide wonderful opportunities for diversified instructional practices for gifted students. However, they do have limited time with them, especially in the lower grades. The AIG Specialists need a more consistent method for consulting with regular education teachers regarding ways to differentiate and provide diversity to meet the unique learning needs of AIG students.

AIG Specialists will consult with general education teachers in K-3 in order to support differentiation with curriculum and instruction, encouraging the use of cluster grouping, acceleration, advanced placement in specific content areas, and higher order thinking skills tied to North Carolina standards. Macon County needs to establish bi-annual meetings with a team that include teachers, AIG Specialists, and other professional staff in order to discuss the various needs of the county's AIG program, including differentiated instruction, professional development, and consistent programming for gifted students in our county.

**Sources of Evidence:** Differentiated Education Plans
Meeting Notes
Emails and other communication logs
Student projects and portfolios
Participation in Advanced Learning
Experiential Opportunities
Student completion of advanced, Honors, AP and online classes
Workshop syllabus and attendance records
Outline of differentiation activities
Teacher reports
Class rosters showing grouping
Completion of advanced classes
Student data
Rosters of attendance in summer institutes
Student work samples and portfolio
Teacher documentation of training and consultation
Newsletter
**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 district level administrator and the AIG Specialists collaborate on the district self-assessment, AIG Plan development, implementation, and revisions. This collaborative effort allows for comprehensive program planning, development, and implementation that meets the needs of gifted students.

The AIG staff meets regularly to assess the program and make necessary improvements. The staff also plans for yearly program implementation, discusses staff development needs with regard to the AIG program, and reviews progress. In addition, the district administrator ensures that AIG program needs are included in district level assessment and improvement efforts.

The AIG administrator monitors the program in the following ways:
1. Meets regularly with AIG specialists to review practices and procedures;
2. Discusses AIG program implementation with principals at monthly administrator’s meeting;
3. Reviews AIG student performance on summative and formative assessments;
4. Meets with stakeholders committee to review program and discuss strengths and needs.

Macon County Schools employs Specialists, Teachers, one AIG Coordinator and one Director in the AIG Department to coordinate, lead, and support the district AIG plan and program. The Coordinator, AIG Specialists, and Teachers in the AIG Department are required to obtain AIG licensure. The AIG Specialists, AIG Coordinator, and AIG Teachers are all AIG licensed at this time.

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

**District Response:** AIG Specialists provide direct service to students, as well as ongoing support to teachers of gifted students at the elementary level. At the intermediate level, AIG Specialists are the core teachers of the gifted students, providing all day differentiation.

AIG Specialists are experts in regard to differentiation of instruction, consulting and collaborating with regular classroom teachers and parents, and in addressing the unique learning, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.
Activities of AIG Specialists include:
- Screening
- Identification
- Placement
- Direct instructional delivery
- Consultation with regular education teachers regarding differentiation including content acceleration, curricular modifications, contract and project based learning
- Planning and implementation of enrichment opportunities
- Advocating for AIG students and their unique needs with administrator, teacher and parents
- Working with counselors to address affective needs
- Assisting AIG students with transitions as they progress to the next educational level
- Working with AIG students to identify their individual strengths and talents

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: As a district, we provide ongoing professional development opportunities for elementary and middle school classroom teachers on instructional practices, curriculum, and social/emotional needs of gifted and advanced learners. The Gifted Department provides a prescribed training list several times a year to each school principal that describes sessions that are available. School may also make their own requests for professional development. Sessions are delivered through PLC's, after school meetings, and teacher workdays. Record of successful completion are documented in our HRMS system.
At the secondary level, teachers for advanced classes, such as AP, are required to attend training for their AP course and provided with opportunities to collaborate with AP teachers across the district. AP Master Teachers provide additional support for new AP teachers. AP teachers are also provided with PD opportunities focused on working with diverse groups of advanced students.

Professional development for all staff in the area of AIG should become more of a part of the district wide staff development plan. Most of the focus has been on identifying essential standards, implementing the state standards, and assessing students' levels of mastery. Professional development needs to be required on the topic of differentiation strategies. We need to raise awareness and knowledge of the distinctive characteristics of gifted students and strategies for differentiating instruction to meet their unique learning needs.

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: At the intermediate level, gifted students are placed in core classes with AIG specialists, so their general education teachers are AIG licensed.

We will implement a requirement for all general education teachers who have gifted students in their classrooms to take an introductory to giftedness course. This course will be taught by the AIG Coordinator and would be offered annually.

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

District Response: Current district initiatives include: Multi-tiered System of Support, establishing State Standards, and using benchmark assessments to make informed instructional decisions. These align well with the need to provide differentiation and acceleration for AIG students.

Planning for staff development is based on district priorities aligned with the strategic plan. Information used to plan staff development comes from various sources as well as analysis of data of student academic performance. Included in this data is information regarding success of AIG students. The AIG Director is a part of the planning team and advocates for including professional development that is aligned with the AIG plan and the needs identified through the self-assessment process each year.

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

District Response: AIG specialists and regular education teachers need to have more time for team planning and collaboration. Implementation of new scheduling processes and more inclusive ways of utilizing support staff will allow for increased opportunities for this type of collaboration. In addition, the AIG Program Director will be included in school level and district wide grade level meetings with a brief time on each agenda to discuss issues related specifically to AIG issues. The AIG Program Director will also explore ways to use technology to increase communication and improve collaboration. The AIG Program Director will attempt to establish a PLC at each school (where one is not already in place) focused on topics of gifted education. Hopefully this PLC will produce a team of teacher leaders within the school system who will become advocates for gifted education and resources on the topic of giftedness for their colleagues.

Ideas to Strengthen the Standard: Improve services at the middle and high school levels by increasing AIG support staff presence. Professional development regarding the AIG plan for Macon County Schools will be provided to every certified staff member on an annual basis.
A quarterly newsletter will be developed and distributed in order to increase knowledge and awareness regarding gifted education.
When planning district wide professional development, AIG program needs will be included.
Develop and implement a district-wide introductory gifted course targeted towards general education teachers.
Establish PLCs at each school focused on the topic of gifted education.

**Sources of Evidence:**
Placement into the program
Development of DEPs
Roster of participation in enrichment activities
Student work samples and portfolios, etc.
Enrollment in advanced, Honors, AP and online classes
Copies of quarterly newsletter
Participation rosters from faculty meetings where AIG topics are addressed
Professional Development Course and records of attendance
PLC meeting notes
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: Most of the experiential learning opportunities that take place for AIG students are the result of partnerships with families and people/businesses within the community. AIG students take field trips into the community, which have included the following:
* Visiting local businesses and organizations to learn about local government and commerce
* Learning about environmental issues
* Activities that include civic groups and service providers (firefighters, hospital, library, etc.)
* Increasing awareness of local history and culture
* Opportunities for activities and classes at Southwestern Community College and Western Carolina University

We often have guest speakers come into classrooms to share information that is relevant to topics being covered. Donations are made by local businesses for supplies and materials. Our students are engaged in a national LEGO robotics project in collaboration with students across western North Carolina. Parents are also very involved as partners. They provide transportation, chaperoning, mentoring, food, and support for activities both within the classroom and within the community.

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: Parents and other stakeholders are made aware of events and activities that the AIG students are engaged in through newsletters, informational letters, phone calls, emails, the Macon County Schools AIG website, displays of student work, and student performances. The local plan is made available on the county website to all parents and stakeholders. In the coming years, we will continue to improve communication with parents through the use of a parent support group.

AIG Specialists are in frequent communication with parents regarding the day to day classroom performance of their students as well as the special events and activities that their children participate in. They also do a good job of encouraging parental and community involvement. The media is notified and often reports on special events and accomplishments of students in the AIG program.

Parents and community members, as well as teachers have access to the local AIG plan, and the
policies and procedures that are part of the implementation of the plan. These articles are made available as hard copy forms and on the Macon County Schools AIG website.

**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:** Macon County Schools has formed an AIG advisory group that meets annually to review the program. The focus of the group will be service delivery and implementation. The group will be comprised of parents, regular education teachers, the Program Director, administrators from elementary, middle and high school levels, and members of the student support teams such as guidance counselors. Macon County Schools will be diligent about inviting parents of gifted students in under-served populations to participate in the stakeholders group.

The group includes representatives of the following stakeholder groups:
- Elementary, middle, and high school administrators
- AP teachers
- Elementary, middle, and high school classroom teachers
- Directors
- Exceptional Children’s support staff
- English Learner support staff
- AIG Specialists
- Representatives from Title I department
- Parents
- Students
- Community members (non-parents)
- Partnership representatives (including higher education)

The AIG Advisory Group will support implementation and monitoring of the MCS Gifted Plan. Members of the Advisory Group will support implementation and monitoring of the gifted plan, as well as championing the work of the AIG department in the community.

**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:** Parents of AIG students are kept well informed of opportunities available to their students within the school system and beyond, through various avenues.

Information is shared in a variety of ways including:
* Informational meetings
* Emails
* Letters
Macon County Schools uses ESL Specialists to translate all pertinent information so that parents can be made aware of opportunities for their children in their native language.

**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:** The Macon County Schools AIG staff has been especially innovative in their efforts to intentionally involve the community in meaningful ways to support gifted education. This is a particular area of strength for the program.

Parents and members of the community have been invited and encouraged to be involved with and support gifted education in the following ways:

- * Invention Convention hosted by the Macon County Public Library
- * Project Based Learning implementation in collaboration with Western Carolina University
- * Guest speakers in the classrooms from the community
- * Enhancing state standards through activities led by local artists
- * College fairs
- * Dual enrollment through Southwestern Community College
- * Odyssey of the Mind with parents as Team Leaders
- * Parents and community members as LEGO League Robotics Team and First Robotics Competition (high school) mentors
- * Use of New Century Scholars as volunteers at various AIG functions

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:** Implement a parent support group that meets with the AIG Director. Topics discussed may include the AIG plan, AIG services, the characteristics of gifted students, research on gifted education, college readiness, and scholarship opportunities for parents of gifted high school students.

Establish an AIG advisory board that meets annually to discuss service delivery and implementation.

**Sources of Evidence:** Listing of community resources visited and accessed

Media reports (newspaper articles and pictures)
Letters to parents
Websites
Newsletters
Advisory Board meeting notes and attendance roster
Communications between AIG staff and community members and employees of WCU and SCC
Reports of activities in which community members have participated
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: Macon County AIG Advisory group works through the self-assessment process to determine the status of the AIG program and to develop a plan that meets the state policy and guidelines. The plan is approved by our local school board and then sent to the state board for final approval. The local plan is on file in the AIG Program Director’s office. Approval of the plan at the local level is reflected both in the plan and in school board minutes.

Macon County Schools' AIG plan was developed by an advisory group representative of our diverse district and the needs of our gifted and advanced students. The AIG Advisory Group was expanded to include a diverse group of educators, parents, and community partners that advocate and share perspectives from their experience and context.
As a part of the plan revision process, the AIG program was evaluated using data, surveys, and informal feedback. Data and feedback were gathered from parent surveys, administrator/teacher surveys, and executive staff regarding services and programming for gifted and advanced students. The advisory group and AIG department worked collaboratively to develop revisions and goals to increase opportunities provided to gifted and advanced students in accordance with state and district expectations. Revisions and goals are supported with evidence-based practices that have resulted in growth of gifted and advanced students.

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

District Response: Macon County Schools monitors implementation of the AIG program in order to comply with current legislation and state policy. Procedures are provided to all school staff. These are reviewed annually with AIG staff and at the school level. Records are maintained and samples are reviewed annually for compliance. The AIG Specialists and the Program Director meet regularly to review program implementation and assessment.

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.

**District Response:** 100% of state AIG funds are used to pay salaries of AIG staff and to provide professional development, instructional supplies and materials, and technology for gifted programming. Due to the limited amount of state funds received for the AIG program, the majority of the funds go toward salaries for the AIG Specialists. The rest of the budget covers professional development and instructional materials, including technology as well as summer programs for students in grades 5-12.

The AIG department uses funds allotted for the local AIG program to support all goals, initiatives, and programs stated in the AIG plan. Each year, a strategic budget is developed and monitored to support the goals of the AIG plan. The plan goals and budget are aligned to the needs of gifted and advanced students throughout the district. Data and feedback are used to prioritize specific goals and needs each year. The annual budget development process occurs in partnership with the director, finance officer, building administrators and superintendent.

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

**District Response:** Data is annually collected and reviewed by AIG staff, teachers, and administrators. Student performance and growth is shared annually with its stakeholders. The EVAAS system provides detailed information to teachers and administrators about growth trends in subgroups, including AIG students. The AIG Program Director analyzes drop-out data via AIG headcounts performed biannually.

**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:** By using non-verbal aptitude tests, the population of identified gifted students reflects the current population in regards to the cultural diversity that is represented in Macon County. Analysis of the current AIG headcount shows that under-represented populations that are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English Language learners, highly gifted and twice exceptional are being served through our gifted programming. The AIG Program Director and Specialists monitor the representation, performance, and retention of these populations.
Practice F
Maintains current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving AIG students.

District Response: Macon County Schools maintains up-to-date records regarding the credentials of personnel serving AIG students. The Director of Personnel in Macon County Schools keeps files on each staff member that are updated annually. In addition, the AIG Director maintains licensure and CEU documentation on staff directly serving in the AIG specialist/teacher capacity.

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: Macon County Schools AIG program utilizes formal surveys to elicit regular feedback from students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders regarding the quality and effectiveness of the local AIG program. Informal feedback is collected from stakeholders throughout the school year. Formal surveys are completed online during plan revision years by stakeholders. The survey elicits information regarding program services, strengths of the program, and areas of improvement. The survey is sent to parents, administrators, central office personnel, regular education teachers, and AIG staff. The data is collected and analyzed in order to evaluate and improve the AIG program in Macon County.

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

District Response: Macon County Schools AIG staff reviews the AIG program on an annual basis. As a result, recommendations are made that support continuous improvement of the program. This review is expanded to include a wider variety of data such as surveys, student performance trends, and the demographic information of students.

An AIG advisory group comprised of teachers, parents and other support staff will meet annually to conduct a program review and make recommendations for program improvements. The AIG Specialists and AIG Director are available for discussions with any stakeholder regarding areas of concern and ideas for improvement or the program. AIG program concerns are included in district level data review and program planning so that the unique learning needs of AIG students are taken into consideration as part of district wide initiatives.

Some types of data included are:
* Student performance on assessment (formative and summative)
* Student grades
* Student participation
* Surveys regarding teacher, student and parent satisfaction with the program
* Demographic data on student identification
* Long term student outcomes

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

**District Response:** Information from the stakeholders group is shared with the AIG staff and administrators through a memo at the end of each school year. It has been left up to building level administrators and the AIG specialists at each school to further share information with regular education teachers and parents. Macon County Schools website, the media, newsletters and school board meeting will be utilized to publicly report the results of data collected pertaining to AIG programming.

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

**District Response:** District policies and procedures exist to safeguard the rights of families; information is available in the AIG handbook as well as on the website. This includes information regarding policies on identification and placement, reassessment/rescreening opportunities, student transfers, and procedures for resolving disagreements. Transfers from other LEAs will be honored prima facie and students will be enrolled in the corresponding program upon registration.

Placement Reevaluation:  
MCS strive to use entry requirements for the Academically Gifted Program that best identify those students in need of accelerated, high-level work. Placement in any of these programs, however, must sometimes be reviewed. A student is responsible for applying him/herself to the work and making steady progress consistent with the program goals. Teachers, guidance counselors, social workers and school administrators will be available to assist the student in overcoming any obstacles to learning. If problems with schoolwork arise, early intervention through communication between the home and school is essential. The following guidelines specify when a parent/teacher/guidance counselor conference is required.

**GUIDELINES FOR MANDATORY PARENT CONFERENCE:**

A conference is required if, over one marking period, the student exhibits any one of the following:
1. Repeated failure to complete work assigned.
2. Substantial difficulty in understanding work that other students can do independently (without parental or tutorial assistance).
3. A semester grade of D or F in any academic subject.
Every effort should be made to assist the student in overcoming academic obstacles. The aim is to provide schoolwork to each child that is at an appropriate level of challenge, so that he/she can experience success. In some circumstances it may become necessary to reevaluate placement to find a better match between the student's need and the academic work expected in the program.

The following guidelines specify when a change of placement from an academic program may be necessary. No one indicator alone is absolute, and any extenuating circumstances in the child's personal life should receive strong consideration. It may be necessary to follow a child's progress to ensure that a change in academic setting at that time does not compound an already existing problem. Parents or other guardians of the child should be consulted and kept informed of any academic difficulties the student experiences. Parents may request a change in the academic placement if, in their opinion, it would benefit the child. If the parents do not desire a change in setting, the school system retains the right to make the final determination of the appropriate level of placement.

CHANGE OF PLACEMENT CRITERIA:

A change in academic placement should be considered if the student shows:
1. Repeated failure to complete substantial work over two marking periods.
2. Consistent pattern of low grades (D's or F's) over one and one-quarter years (grades assigned by two full-day teachers or two teams of teachers).

Change in placement criteria, or criteria requiring a parent conference, should be discussed initially only between teachers, guidance counselors and parents. It is not appropriate for a teacher to discuss change of placement criteria directly with the student concerned. Before a final decision is made, the student may be included in the discussion at the option of the parents.

PROCEDURE TO RESOLVE DISAGreements:

As required by state law, the MCS AIG Plan includes a procedure to resolve disagreements between parents or guardians and school officials when a child is not identified as an academically/intellectually gifted student or about the appropriateness of services/placement offered. In this school system, this procedure is based on parent rights and due process procedures. Access to Records in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and MCS Policy 4010, MCS grants parents their due process rights.

The primary goal of the AIG department is to serve as the lead advocate for all gifted and advanced students at MCS. Through involvement in district policies, procedures, and practices, the department works to maintain a high level of awareness regarding decisions made that influence gifted students. The LEA plan includes equitable identification procedures, placement, services, reassessment, transfer, and procedures to resolve disagreements that are clearly articulated in written form, as well as communicated by schools. Each of these processes are evaluated annually to ensure students, parents, and families receive adequate support in helping gifted identified students maximize their academic potential.

Informed consent for identification and services is provided through the required referral and results form. This form requires a parent signature for the student to be screened for identification and provided services if they are identified.

Rationale for Talent Development Screening/ Rescreening: Unidentified MCS students in grades 4-12
may warrant rescreening for potential gifted identification and placement if they demonstrate one or more of the following traits and have not been assessed in the past 12 months by the AIG Department:
- Student entered MCS after the initial third grade screening and performance is on at least grade level according to district grade level assessments in both math and reading.
- Student has earned a minimum of 95th %ile on an achievement testing (EOGs or EOCs).
- Student has been placed on a 504 or IEP with newly implemented testing accommodations and is now performing above grade level.
- Student participated in EL identification procedures in 3rd grade, but did not qualify as gifted.
- Student is recommended for testing by School Guidance Counselor or another agency or individual working with them.

Procedures to Resolve Disagreements (Effective: August 25, 2013) Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 115C -150.7 (7) and § 150B, Article 3, the parent/Guardian has the right to disagree with the following procedures and services: Identification of student and appropriate services for the gifted student. Disagreement with identification/services must be filed within 90 calendar days of the initial decision:
1. The parent/guardian makes a written request for a conference with the school-based AIG committee to discuss concerns regarding identification or services. The school principal is notified of this concern. A conference between the school and the parent must be scheduled within 15 school days of receipt of the written contact from parents. At the conference, the committee will share the identification process and the documentation used
2. If the concern/disagreement is not resolved at the school-based conference: The parent/guardian may appeal the decision by sending written notice to the Director of AIG. The Director of AIG will notify the school and the Superintendent of the appeal. Within fifteen days of receipt of the notice of appeal from the parents, the Director of AIG will schedule a conference. The conference must occur within 30 days of the receipt of the notice of appeal, unless the parents request an extension of time. The Director of AIG will review all documentation and the parent/guardian’s disagreement. At the conference, the Director of AIG will facilitate a process to resolve the parents’ disagreement with the district’s decisions
3. If resolution still has not been achieved, the parent has the right to petition an Administrative Law judge for a contested case hearing. The review (in writing) shall be limited to whether the LEA failed to identify the child as an academically or intellectually gifted student, or whether the local AIG Plan has been implemented appropriately with regard to educational services provided to the child. This decision is final. Attorney’s fees are not available to parents in the event that they prevail in a due process hearing.

Ideas to Strengthen the Standard: Establish an AIG advisory board to review and revise the local AIG program and plan annually.
Macon County Schools website, the media, newsletters and school board meeting will be utilized to publicly report the results of data collected pertaining to AIG programming.

Sources of Evidence: AIG Handbook
Eligibility and Placement Record
Macon County School Board meeting minutes
Macon County Schools financial reports
Documentation of staff credentials
Survey results
Stakeholder feedback
Student performance on assessment (formative and summative)
Student grades
Student participation
Surveys regarding teacher, student and parent satisfaction with the program
Demographic data on student identification
Long term student outcomes
Intervention Plan
Parental Consent for Evaluation Form
Glossary (optional):

Appendix (optional):
Elementary DEP.docx (Appendix)
High School DEP.docx (Appendix)
Intermediate DEP.docx (Appendix)
Intervention Plan.docx (Appendix)
Middle School DEP.docx (Appendix)
Parental Permission.docx (Appendix)
AIG Plan Board Approval.pdf (Local Board Approval Document)