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

Approved by local Board of Education on: 04-JUN-19
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Rutherford 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, Rutherford County Schools local AIG plan is as follows:

Rutherford County Schools Vision for local AIG program: All Rutherford County students will graduate prepared for college and career success. Our mission details preparing all students for lifelong learning in a global community by partnering with families and communities to promote a safe, nurturing school environment and provide rigorous academic and career preparation experiences.

District Transformation Strategies

Transformation Strategy 1: Engage every student in rigorous, personalized learning focused on college and career success.

Transformation Strategy 2: Ensure that a comprehensive, integrated system of support fosters students’ social and emotional health.

Transformation Strategy 3: Ensure all students’ equitable access to safe, modern educational facilities and appropriate learning resources.

Transformation Strategy 4: Initiate, sustain, and leverage strong external partnerships that support student learning and school success.
### Sources of funding for local AIG program (as of 2019)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>State Funding</th>
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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:** Rutherford County Schools (RCS) uses a clear, comprehensive, and equitable screening, referral, and identification process for all grade levels. The Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) staff utilizes individual nominations, parent nominations, teacher recommendations, aptitude assessments, standardized achievement assessments, grades, and other pertinent data to locate all students who may potentially be identified as AIG.

**SCREENING AND REFERRALS**
The AIG program conducts a broad sweep of the general population in Grades 3-8 during each school year in order to determine a pool of students for AIG screening. Below are the data points used to determine screening pools and referrals for Grades K-12:

**Grades K-2**
Students in kindergarten through third grade may be referred for formal identification for academically or intellectually gifted services when there is a demonstration of need for differentiated service above the current grade level. A student may also be served by grade acceleration should student needs warrant this decision. The district employs the use of the Iowa Acceleration Scale to help guide the decision-making process in order to determine the possible need for grade acceleration.

**Grade 3 Screening Pool Nomination Data** (Evidence only needed from one indicator below to enter pool):
* Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test 2 (NNAT2) ~ 87% or higher
* Grade 3 Pretest (Beginning of Grade ~ BOG) ~ Level 5
* NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) ~ 85% or higher on the reading and/or math portion (two out of the most recent three testing cycles)
* Student or parent nomination
* Teacher recommendation

**Grades 4-8 Screening Pool Nomination Data** (Evidence only needed from one indicator below to enter pool):
* End of Grade (EOG) ~ Level 5 in Reading and/or Math
* NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) ~ 85% or higher on the reading and/or math portion (two out of the most recent three testing cycles)
* Student or parent nomination
* Teacher recommendation

**Grades 9-12 Screening Pool Nomination Data**
Rutherford County Schools conducts a broad sweep of the general population at the beginning of each school year for students in Grades 9-12. Evidence will only be needed from one indicator listed.
below in order to enter the screening pool.
* Grade 8 EOG test ~ Level 5
* End-of-Course (EOC) Assessment ~ Level 5
* NC Final Exam ~ at or above 90 percent
* PreACT, PSAT, ACT, or SAT ~ at or above the 92nd percentile
* Advanced Placement Exam ~ Level 5
* Rank ~ top 10% of current class
* Student or parent nomination
* Teacher recommendation

Once screening pools have been determined, parental permission is requested and required in order for further evaluation of students to occur for formal AIG placement consideration. Parents are provided with a brochure explaining the AIG program with links to the RCS AIG program website.

**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:** Rutherford County Schools employs the use of multiple qualitative and quantitative researched-based screening instruments, referrals, and identification procedures to align practices that support the state definition of AIG students. These measures help reveal student aptitude, achievement, or potential achievement. RCS is devoted to recognizing the individual potential of each child. Therefore, we have developed multiple pathways for gifted student identification, analyzing each student's comprehensive learning profile to determine needs beyond the regular classroom.

Students may be identified as Academically Gifted, Intellectually Gifted, or Academically and Intellectually Gifted.

**Academically Gifted (AR, AM or AG):**
Students who show high achievement in the areas of reading and/or math are considered for Academically Gifted identification. Students may be identified in the areas of reading, math or both reading and math. Students will have a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) that will focus on personalized learning to meet their academic needs.

*Academically Gifted in Reading (AR)
*Academically Gifted in Math (AM)
*Academically Gifted in Reading and Math (AG)

**Intellectually Gifted (IG):**
Students who score at or above the 97th percentile on total composite on an approved aptitude/ability test, but do not have supporting achievement criteria will be identified Intellectually Gifted (IG). Students identified solely as Intellectually Gifted will have Individualized Differentiated Education Plans (IDEPs) developed to best meet their academic needs.
Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI):
Students who qualify as both Academically Gifted (AG) and Intellectually Gifted (IG) will be noted as Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI) and will also have an IDEP.

IDENTIFICATION
The K-3 G.E.A.R. Program (Gifted Enrichment Acceleration Readiness) focuses on developing talent and enriching the academic and intellectual potential in all students. While formal identification begins at the end of the Grade 3, elementary AIG specialists provide inclusion opportunities for lessons using Primary Education Thinking Skills (P.E.T.S.) and the Jacob’s Ladder Reading Comprehension Program for all classes K-3. Elementary AIG Specialists also provide classroom teachers other resources such as U-STARS~PLUS. These opportunities are especially important and helpful in identifying potential advanced learners, particularly from underserved populations.

Grades 3-12
With parental permission, students in the screening pool are administered the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Students who score at 90% or higher on the verbal (reading) and/or quantitative (math) portions of the CogAT are placed/identified in that area or areas. School Review Teams (SRTs) also consider grades, EOG scores, EOC scores, MAP scores and other available data to help determine possible placement for students not at the 90th percentile. In the identification process, no one criterion will automatically keep a student from being considered. However, any single criterion, if superior, may indicate a need for gifted identification and services. In addition, RCS prohibits the practice of "de-gifting" students unless mandated by parent/guardian.

To create an equitable representation of all ethnic and socio-economic subgroups, disaggregated data are used to compare students to their demographic peers. Consistent practices, including established School Review Teams (SRT) at all schools, have been established and are monitored and led by the AIG coordinator.

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: Rutherford County Schools utilizes U-STARS~PLUS (Using Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students ~ Promoting Learning in Underrepresented Students) for early elementary teachers. This program helps recognize and nurture talent development in children from economically disadvantaged and/or culturally diverse families and children with disabilities in order to improve their academic achievement and to provide them with access to advanced educational opportunities.

As a part of the G.E.A.R. Talent Development Program (Gifted Enrichment Acceleration Readiness), elementary AIG specialists provide services of talent development allowing RCS to increase its identification of students from underrepresented populations in the elementary setting by using TOPS (Teacher Observation of Potential in Students) forms. Through consistent use of this form, teachers have the ability to recognize outstanding abilities, especially how these abilities manifest themselves
in under-served populations. Using TOPS as guidance, Elementary AIG specialists have also developed additional gifted checklists for regular classroom teachers and specials teachers to assist in identifying potentially gifted students.

RCS will continue to administer a blanket aptitude screening for all third grade students using a culturally fair assessment. At present, the NNAT2 (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test, 2nd Edition) is being utilized. In addition, the availability of multiple criteria and pathways to eligibility, ensure that no single criterion prevents eligibility.

The AIG program is committed to improve both equity and access for all students. RCS will continue to offer professional development and support for teachers in the recognition of outstanding potential in students from all populations and share opportunities for talent development among students K-12. More consistent staff development efforts need to be made to ensure all teachers are aware of indicators of giftedness for students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and/or twice exceptional. Currently, we are analyzing data of each sub-group to determine underrepresentation. In addition, RCS is in the process of evaluating and exploring the use of local norms in the identification process.

**Practice D**

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

**District Response:** Rutherford County Schools provides screening, referral, and identification procedures that focus on equal opportunity and access for all students, including students from under-represented populations. The program coordinator attends district principals' meetings to share important AIG information and identification processes. The AIG program coordinator, specialists, and facilitators share important information regarding screening, referrals, and identification processes with regular classroom teachers, specials teachers and school counselors. In addition, a School Review Team (SRT) is established at each school. Student Review Teams include, but are not limited to, the principal or administrative designee, school counselor, AIG specialist, and classroom teachers at each school.

Student Review Team responsibilities include:

* Implementing the district's referral, screening, identification, and instructional placement processes

* Making decisions on the strength-based needs of the student

* Providing equitable access for students from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds

* Receiving permission for testing from the parent/guardian for any aptitude or achievement testing not generally administered in the regular school program

* Recording information used in decision-making

* Determining program options for students
Practice E
Disseminates information regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes to school personnel, parents/ families, students, and the community-at-large.

District Response: RCS uses clear, comprehensive, and equitable screening, referral, and identification procedures for all grade levels. This information, along with specific program details, is available to students, parents, faculty, administrators and community members through various media formats throughout the academic year. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

* AIG Program website linked to the district and school websites
* AIG brochures made available for staff, parents, students, and community members at the district office and each school
* AIG presence at district informational events including Kinder-Palooza, AIG Family Nights, and AP Academy Events
* Yearly presentations to school staff regarding AIG identification and service
* All AIG publications are available in both English and Spanish
* Quarterly AIG newsletters
* Identification and service flow chart

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: The AIG Program for Rutherford County Schools maintains individual documentation for each identified student. These individual files each contain an initial student referral form, a signed permission to evaluate form, any teacher/parent/student nomination forms, a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP), and a signed evaluation results letter with permission to receive services.

Based on the data from each AIG student's assessment, the SRT initially recommends service matching to a program option of differentiated instruction that is equivalent to the student's academic and intellectual needs. Service matching options are addressed in the following manner:

*Differentiated Education Plan (DEP): A DEP for Math and/or Reading is written for each identified AIG student demonstrating a need for differentiation beyond that which is normally provided by regular education. The DEP outlines the program service options appropriate for an individual student at each grade level.

*Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP): An IDEP is developed for the very small group of unique AIG students who do not fit into any programs listed on the DEP and for students identified as Intellectually Gifted (IG) and Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI).

During an annual review, if a student no longer requires a particular service option, the SRT will convene to discuss possible modifications in the student's DEP or IDEP. When an AIG student is
returned to a general education program, an IDEP will be developed and the student will be provided with support in order to reenter the service options at a later time.

During the fall of each school year, the AIG program specialists, facilitators, and coordinator provide opportunities for all parents/families of identified AIG students to participate in an annual review of AIG students' program options and services. This allows parents the opportunity to be an integral part of the development of their child's educational plan. Signed copies of DEPs and IDEPs are given to parents, students, teachers, and counselors as appropriate and are placed in AIG student files.

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:** Ideas/Strategies for Strengthening the Standard:
* Continue to ensure parent and student referral documents are on the AIG website
* Continue to ensure program brochures are made available at district office and each school
* Continue to ensure all program publications are available in both English and Spanish
* Continue to offer AIG refresher training for district administrators and all schools at the beginning of each school year
* Continue to advocate and represent the gifted student population at Principals' Meetings and Leadership Team Meetings
* Continue to encourage student portfolios as evidence for teacher recommendations

**Sources of Evidence:** Sources of Evidence:
* District and school websites, brochures, handbooks, nomination forms, etc.
* Publications available in both English and Spanish
* Agenda and presentation templates from informational and DEP review meetings with faculty, Board of Education, parents, etc.
* RCS AIG plan
* Documented use of Naglieri Nonverbal Aptitude Test (NNAT), Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT), NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), End-of-Grade (EOG), End-of-course (EOC), Teacher’s Observation of Potential in Students Form (TOPS)
* Student AIG folders containing testing information, DEPs, IDEPs
* Records of all testing data from screening pools
* Minutes from School Review Team meetings, Principals' Meetings, and Leadership Team Meetings
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: Rutherford County Schools offers a system-wide baseline of gifted service options. A continuum of services beyond the elementary level includes advanced level classes to help meet the academic needs of middle and high school gifted learners. Our goal is to provide curriculum, coaching, professional development, as well as site-based support on how to best meet the academic needs of gifted and advanced learners in all settings.

Elementary:
At the elementary level, AIG specialists serve AIG identified students and potential gifted students through a blended service model to include classroom learning environments, pull-out service, push-in service and an expanded talent development component. In addition, to provide instruction to identified students, AIG specialists serve as the school resident expert in gifted education by providing consultative support.

During the 2019-2020 school year, elementary school AIG specialists will implement the new G.E.A. R. Talent Development Program (Gifted Enrichment Acceleration Readiness). This program will help foster talent development, enrich academic learning, and support social and emotional growth for our potentially gifted students in Grades K-3. All identified gifted students in Grades 4-5 will participate in a reading (Reading Innovation Day) and/or math (Math Innovation Day) pull-out program. Since RCS only employs two elementary AIG specialists that serve all ten elementary schools, students will be served in the pull-out program once a month. Students who are identified as AR will attend Reading Innovation Days. Students who are identified AM will attend Math Innovation Days. Students who are identified AG or AI will attend both Innovation Days. Service matching for students identified as IG only will be in accordance with their particular individualized education plan (IDEP). In addition to Innovation Days, all AIG students in Grades 4-5 will participate in Genius Hour during Innovation Days. Genius Hour allows students to explore their own passions, encourages creativity in the classroom, and provides students choices with their learning. Genius Hour projects will be shared during our annual AIG family night in the spring of each school year. Services for identified students in Grades 4-5 include working independently with the AIG specialist through consultation and Renzulli Learning, an online gifted education platform.

During the summer of 2019, services will be extended to include a one-week summer enrichment camp, Camp Innovate, offered at two different locations for all identified students in Grades 3-5. Camp Innovate will challenge and develop each child's creativity, innovation, and problem-solving skills through engaging and exciting activities. The goal of Rutherford County Schools is to enrich
each child's gifted education, inspire future innovation, and build confidence through collaborative communication. (Camp Innovate will be available to all identified students in Grades 6-8 during the summer of 2020.)

The RCS Elementary Curriculum and Instruction Team has developed and implemented instructional frameworks, aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, for the regular classroom in both mathematics and literacy. Since the current Math Instructional Framework (MIF) and Literacy Instructional Framework (LIF) are designed for core lessons, the AIG Department will begin to develop extension and/or acceleration activities for each lesson.

Middle School:
AIG identified students in Grades 6-8 are served in the general education setting. Rigorous curriculum is available for all students including accelerated PLUS courses, high school courses, and Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM). During the 2018-2019 school year, AIG facilitators were added at each middle and high school. Job descriptions were developed to coincide with the AIG program standards. During this plan cycle, services will be expanded to include an AIG Specialist for middle and high school. The AIG specialist will partner with each of the AIG facilitators to support AIG students' social and emotional needs through mentoring and other additional supports. During the 8th grade year, students will create a high school course plan using a 4-year DEP for backward mapping. The AIG specialist will communicate on a regular basis with the school counselor, regular classroom teachers and administrative staff to share any concerns, thoughts, or ideas in regards to meeting the needs of students. The specialist will provide additional resources to classroom teachers, as well as serve as an additional advocate for high level Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) groups.

High School:
At the high school level, AIG students are served in the general education setting. Rigorous curriculum is available for all students including honors courses, Advanced Placement Courses, dual enrollment, and CDM. AIG students are strongly encouraged to take part in the Advanced Placement Academy, which provides access to rigorous, relevant, and challenging Advanced Placement curriculum and social/emotional supports. It should be noted that students do not have to participate in the Advanced Placement Academy in order to access Advanced Placement courses. Students may apply to the Rutherford Early College High School (REaCH), which provides advanced curriculum and dual-enrollment opportunities for students in Grades 9-12.

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

District Response: The AIG Program uses Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) and Individual Differentiated Education Plans (IDEPs) to align program and services with areas of identification, goals, and resources. During 2019-2020 school year, RCS will evaluate and develop new DEPs and IDEPs to better meet the needs of all students. A team consisting of the AIG coordinator, AIG specialists, and AIG facilitators will work collaboratively to develop a more comprehensive plan of implementation. The team will focus on transitions from elementary to secondary education and processes to better track the performance of identified students so appropriate interventions can be made to increase student success.
General education will continue to have an integral responsibility to provide differentiated curriculum to AIG students. RCS will continue to encourage administrators to cluster AIG students.

To make professional development easily accessible, AIG specialists will deliver professional development in the area of differentiated instructional strategies that will be available to all classroom teachers. Professional development will occur at least four times each school year. Topics will include but are not limited to:

* Differentiating Instruction with Layered Curriculum and Tiered Lessons
* Depth and Complexity
* Understanding the Gifted Child
* Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Students
* Twice-Exceptional Gifted Students

Middle schools offer accelerated classes which provide services for gifted students. However, not all classes are instructed by teachers with an AIG certification or a local certificate. Over the next plan cycle, middle school teachers of all PLUS courses will be encouraged to meet the local professional development requirements to receive a local certificate so they may better serve their students.

High schools offer honors, dual enrollment, and Advanced Placement courses and an array of services that students self-select. Teachers of honors courses will be encouraged to participate in professional development in the area of differentiation strategies. Teachers of Advanced Placement courses will continue to be offered opportunities to attend Advanced Placement Summer Institutes and One-Day Workshops sponsored by the College Board.

**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:** RCS consistently analyzes current student achievement and growth data at the school and district level. The AIG staff works in tandem with administrators and classroom teachers to analyze data, evaluate procedures, and develop practices based on the comprehensive needs of all students.

Several practices within this plan articulate the ways in which AIG programs and services are connected to and integral to the LEA’s total instructional practice. The AIG coordinator will continue working in tandem with the district’s curriculum teams to ensure the needs for AIG students are met. The AIG Program supports the LEA’s Strategic Plan for Achieving Academic Excellence for all students. A variety of service models are utilized throughout the district depending on the unique needs of each school. Each school has identified set times each week to facilitate effective differentiated instruction to support the growth of all students through the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). AIG specialists will continue to assist classroom teachers in the development and creation of curriculum and resources for high achieving students.
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:** There is extensive information regarding differentiated services and instruction for AIG students and regulations relating to gifted education. The AIG program constantly looks for ways to ensure that this information is shared with teachers, school administrators, and support staff.

The AIG department adequately informs all teachers, administrators, and instructional staff on differentiated services and instruction, regulations related to gifted education, and the local AIG program plan through:
* Beginning-of-year staff meetings at each school
* Collaborative planning meetings among all stakeholders
* Parent, student, teacher, and administrator surveys
* District and school websites
* Program brochures
* District meetings
* Professional development
* AIG Family Nights

During the 2018-2019 school year, the RCS AIG program was rebranded. A newly designed logo, website, and brochures were created to highlight the program and increase communication and awareness among all stakeholders. Consistent branding, presentations, and differentiated service information is made available to all RCS employees.

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:** RCS ensures that all teachers and schools are aware of student identification and service needs at all levels by:

* Providing AIG student projected lists to administrators and support staff for each school at the end of each school year to help guide class and course placements.

* Presenting general information sessions available to all teachers and schools by AIG specialists and AIG facilitators.

* Organizing AIG middle school tours for all rising 6th graders at each middle school to ensure successful secondary school transition.
Addresses the social and emotional needs of AIG students through collaboration among school counseling personnel, regular education teachers, AIG specialists, and others.

**District Response:** RCS addresses the social and emotional needs of AIG students through a multi-tiered collaboration among stakeholders in the following ways:

* AIG elementary specialists meet weekly to work on instructional units that embed topics of Growth Mindset and GRIT which are relevant to the social and emotional needs of gifted students.

* AIG specialists serve on the Instructional Support Team (IST) along with Instructional Coaches and Technology Facilitators. Team members meet to collaborate on the holistic needs of all students.

* AIG specialists meet on a monthly basis with each grade level at all schools they serve.

* Camp Innovate provides students the opportunity to foster team building and leadership skills.

* All RCS students have access to social and emotional support by way of two vital programs in the district: Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) and the Robert and Janice McNair Educational Foundation. These two programs have several initiatives, including providing early college awareness to students across the district beginning in elementary school. One key aspect of the McNair program is to assign all students in Grades 7-12 an adult, community-based mentor who meets with them on a regular basis throughout each school year. High school students serve as mentors to elementary school students. School counselors assist McNair staff with the implementation of this programming at each school.

* High school students enrolled in the Advanced Placement Academy participate in quarterly seminars and yearly school trips that provide continued development in social, emotional, and academic areas.

**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:** RCS ensures that all students are offered a continuum of services that match their needs. The AIG coordinator works closely with all levels of leadership to develop acceleration plans for individual students and other options for highly gifted students.

At the elementary level, RCS will continue to provide the information concerning early admission to kindergarten based on NC General Statute (115C-364). The AIG coordinator will continue to work with all levels of leadership when grade acceleration is considered. Currently, the district uses the Iowa Acceleration Scale for grade acceleration consideration.

At the middle and high school levels, students have access to compacted curriculum in accelerated classes. High School credit-bearing courses are offered in middle schools for those students in the accelerated pathway. College level courses are available for students in high school through dual enrollment and/or Advanced Placement courses.
RCS articulates a clear plan for CDM which is shared with students, school counselors, administrators, and parents via the district website. In addition, middle and high school students are contacted by the AIG coordinator on a regular basis so they may be reminded of the CDM opportunity and deadlines. CDM is an option that allows students to demonstrate mastery of a course's content in order to receive credit for the course. In 2013, the NC Department of Public Instruction instituted State Board Policy GCS-M-001- Section 13, which explains the transitioning away from seat time in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning.

Students in Grades 9-12 who are able to show a deep understanding of the content without seat-time and classroom learning experience are eligible. CDM is also open to students in Grades 6-8, but only for certain high school courses offered at the middle school. Earning CDM credit requires students to complete a multi-phase assessment process that includes an examination and an artifact. The Phase I assessment process focuses on an examination that establishes a student's strong foundational understanding of the course material. The Phase II process focuses on the artifact and establishes a student's ability to apply knowledge to show deep understanding.

A testing window is offered each fall and spring to provide an opportunity for high school students to be administered EOCs, NCFEs or CTE post assessments to earn Credit By Demonstrated Mastery. For middle school students, a testing window is offered each spring. The CDM applications for high school students are due in August and January with testing windows in September and February. The CDM applications for middle school students are due in January with a testing window in February.

**Practice H**

Implements intentional strategies to broaden access to advanced learning opportunities for underrepresented 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:** RCS served as a pilot for the U-STARS~PLUS program in its inception. As such, the district has been committed to consistently working to increase the screening, referral, and identification of traditionally underrepresented populations including culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted and twice-exceptional.

In efforts to increase our underrepresented population, we will implement our early elementary G.E.A. R. Program (Gifted Enrichment Acceleration Readiness) to assist in the identification process and foster talent development for this population of students.

During this plan cycle, the AIG department will focus on the following goals:

* Work closely with the ESL faculty to further develop strategies and practices that meet the unique academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of our ESL AIG students

* Work closely with our Exceptional Children Program Director and program specialists to further develop strategies and practices that meet the unique needs of our twice-exceptional and highly gifted students
* Continue to promote awareness of resources available for economically disadvantaged gifted learners

* Advocate for higher representation of underserved populations in advanced courses at the middle and high schools

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

**District Response**: Rutherford County Schools offers a wide array of extracurricular programs and events that enhance and further develop the needs and interests of AIG students.

Elementary School Opportunities:

* Elementary Book Challenge
* Spelling Bee
* Robotics Teams
* Daughter of American Revolution (DAR) Competition
* Family Resource Advocacy Program
* National Elementary Beta (select schools)
* AIG Family Nights
* Camp Innovate
* AIG Leadership Club

Middle School Opportunities:

* Battle of the Books Competition (local, regional, and state)

* Quiz Bowl
* Isothermal Community College Junior Challenge

* Robotics Team
* Spelling Bee Competition (local, regional, state)
* National Junior Beta Club

* Math Competitions

* Duke Talent Identification Program

High School Opportunities:

* Quiz Bowl
* Isothermal Community College Senior Challenge
* Governor’s School
* Summer Ventures
* AP Academy

* Gen(i)us Incentive Program (ACT/SAT preparation)
* National Beta Club
* National Honor Society
* National Technical Honor Society
* Speech and Debate Competitions
* Robotics Team
* Inquiry Based Projects

* Service Learning Projects
* Math Competitions
* Science Olympiad

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:** * Develop support options for students who qualify for the AIG program of services but do not perform well academically
* Provide an AIG handbook for teachers and administrators
* Work with the Exceptional Children Department to provide professional development and support in identifying and serving students who are twice-exceptional
* Continue to develop smooth transitions for AIG students from elementary to secondary education
* Ensure presence of AIG at all levels of leadership

**Sources of Evidence:** * Documentation of student meetings with AIG specialists
* Professional development attendance records
* System to track student performance
* Agendas for events with AIG information presentation
* Event programs for various district competitions
* Spelling Bee Local Website
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: In order to adapt the NCSCOS according to identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles K-12, Rutherford County Schools focuses efforts at the K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 levels.

The AIG program ensures that a comprehensive foundation begins with our elementary G.E.A.R Talent Development Program for talent development and enrichment, aligning all instruction to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS). While our K-5 specialists provide nurturing and enrichment opportunities in Grades K-3, they are responsible for offering acceleration and extension in the areas of math and language arts to identified students in Grades 4 and 5. The implementation of Reading and Math Innovation Days helps provide this acceleration, in addition to numerous enrichment opportunities. Innovation Days are directly tied to the NCSCOS which gives students opportunities for deeper comprehension to enrich their advanced academic abilities. In addition, students will pursue their own passion and creativity through a new Genius Hour initiative. Genius Hour is an approach to learning built around student curiosity, self-directed learning, and passion based work.

During the 2018-2019 school year, AIG specialists began collaboration with district instructional coaches to create gifted extension activities for the Math Instructional Framework (MIF) and Literacy Instructional Framework (MIF), which are directly tied to the the NCSCOS. Using research-based methods, curriculum development is an ongoing process as the NCSCOS is revised and the RCS frameworks are evaluated.

At the elementary level, RCS offers AIG students:

* Early entry Kindergarten (in accordance with State Board of Education policy GCS-J-001 G.S.115C-364d)

* U-STARTS~PLUS
* Jacob’s Ladder (a reading comprehension program for Grades K-9)
* Junior Great Books (discussion of classic texts with a facilitator)
* Primary Education Thinking Skills (P.E.T.S.)

* Inclusion/demonstration lessons by K-5 AIG specialists
* Reading and Math Innovation Days led by K-5 AIG specialists

* Subject acceleration (Math/Reading)

* Grade acceleration

* Daily leveled group instruction in reading and math
* Summer Enrichment through Camp Innovate

Students in middle school are offered courses that are differentiated through our "rigor in the middle" initiative. In Grades 6-8, RCS provides accelerated and enriched opportunities for subject grouping in Math and English Language Arts. High school courses available in middle school include English I, Math I, Math II and Earth/Environmental Science.

In middle school:
*The 6th grade PLUS math program compacts curriculum for 6th and half of 7th grade math NCSCOS.
*The 7th grade PLUS math program compacts curriculum for half of 7th and all 8th grade math NCSCOS.

*The 8th grade PLUS math program offers Math I and/or Math II depending on student performance.
*The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade PLUS English Language Arts program is an accelerated and enriched study of the ELA NCSCOS at each grade level.

*The 8th grade program offers English I depending on student performance.

*The 8th grade program also offers Earth/Environmental Science depending on student performance.
* Credit By Demonstrated Mastery is offered for all students for high school courses taught in middle school.

RCS offers several options for gifted high school students including:

* Honors courses
* Dual Enrollment courses to include NC Career and College Promise ~ Isothermal Community College online and face-to-face courses
* Advanced Placement courses
* Advanced Placement Academy
* North Carolina Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS ~ online high school courses)

* North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM ~ Interactive Video Conference courses & NCSSM Online)

* Rutherford Early College High School (REaCH)
* Accelerated high school scheduling leading to early graduation
* Credit by Demonstrated Mastery
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: Rutherford County Schools defines gifted students as "students who require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program." Our district provides differentiated services involving extended, applied, and conceptual thinking that build upon and extend beyond the NCSCOS in core subject areas.

Elementary:
The K-5 AIG specialists are in the process of collaborating with the Instructional Support Team (IST) to create gifted extensions to curriculum units for regular classroom inclusion. These units and other district resources are housed in the RCS Elementary Framework. The framework is comprised of many resources including the Literacy Instruction Framework (LIF), Math Instruction Framework (MIF) and Science Instruction Framework (SIF). In addition, the AIG specialists continuously develop lessons that are used for advanced level students during the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) time. The AIG specialists also assist in professional development dealing with curriculum and differentiation which is available to all staff.

Middle:
In middle school, teachers of PLUS math and language arts courses meet on a regular basis with middle school instructional coaches and AIG facilitators to promote instructional units that provide both differentiation and acceleration even within the already compacted curriculum.

High:
AP teachers at the high schools submit a course syllabus on a yearly basis as part of the AP Course Audit process for each district. This ensures that AP teachers have clear guidelines on curricular and resource requirements that must be in place for AP courses and to ensure courses are designed to meet the same clearly articulated college-level criteria as directed by the College Board across high schools. The teachers of honors courses at the high school level adapt curriculum content, instructional practices, and assessment practices in order to provide extension, enrichment, and acceleration of standards.

In all Grades K-12, teachers are encouraged to give great attention to developing and implementing units of study that:

* Allow students to go beyond the traditional curriculum in both depth and breadth
* Offer material in greater complexity, novelty, acceleration, and pacing
* Provide multiple opportunities for students to take greater responsibility for their learning
* Distinguish a difference in the quality of work expected rather than the quantity of work desired
* Provide students with problem-seeking and problem-solving opportunities
**Practice C**
Incorporates a variety of evidence-based resources that enhance student learning.

**District Response:** The AIG program has introduced several research-based supplemental resources that augment curriculum and instruction in the regular classroom. We will continue to consistently support classroom teachers in the use of these resources. We will also continue to strive to ensure district-wide equity and access to these materials.

Supplemental research-based resources that are being used to augment curriculum and instruction include:

* U-STARS~PLUS
* Jacob’s Ladder
* Junior Great Books
* Creative Problem Solving
* Primary Education Thinking Skills (P.E.T.S.)
* Hands-On Equations
* Challenging Common Core Language Arts Lessons ~ The College of William and Mary’s Center for Gifted Education
* Challenging Common Core Math Lessons ~ The College of William and Mary’s Center for Gifted Education
* Differentiated Instruction with Menus (K-8 ~ Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies)
* Differentiated Instruction with Menus for the Inclusive Classroom (K-8 ~ Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies)
* Word Within a Word (Michael Thompson series)

* Magic Lens (Michael Thompson series)

* Vocabulary Workshop (Sadlier-Oxford Series)

* Vocabulary from Classical Roots (Norma Fifer and Nancy Flowers Series)

* Advanced Placement Insight

During the 2019-2020 school year, Renzulli Learning, an interactive online system that provides a personalized learning environment for students, will be implemented in Grades 4-5. Renzulli Learning is designed by Dr. Joseph Renzulli and Sally Reis specifically for gifted students. Increased engagement and higher academic performance are results of successful implementation. The AIG coordinator will evaluate the program throughout the year with plans to implement Renzulli Learning in the middle school the following school year.

**Practice D**
Fosters the development of future-ready skills including critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and leadership.
**District Response:** The priority of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the globally competitive world. Students will excel in rigorous and relevant core curriculum that reflects what they need to know and demonstrate in a global environment. Student achievement will be measured with an assessment system that informs instruction and evaluates knowledge, skills, performance, and dispositions needed in the globally competitive environment. Students will enroll in a course of study designed to prepare them to stay ahead of international competition. Students will use technology to access and demonstrate new knowledge and skills that they will need as lifelong learners. Students will have the opportunity to graduate from high school with an associate's degree or college transfer credit.

Rutherford County Schools acknowledges this priority and has been a leading school system within the state in regards to technology access. The district's Going G.L.O.B.A.L. (Growing Learning Opportunities Beyond All Limits) initiative, now in its ninth year, has created a 1:1 learning environment where teachers K-12 and students in all grades have been provided with an individual device. Every instructional classroom in the district is equipped with cutting edge learning tools such as interactive whiteboards and document cameras. Using these tools, teachers and students are participating in inquiry-based, authentic learning experiences promoting critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and innovation. This technological movement has created more avenues for both vertical alignment and collaboration. RCS acknowledges that both our global environment and technology are ever changing and is committed to constantly evaluate and assess what is occurring to ensure the continued development of future-ready content and skills.

RCS is committed to:
* Infusing high-level content through curriculum writing and unit development which includes global awareness, civic and economic liberties, and health awareness

* Providing specific opportunities for critical thinking and problem solving through questioning techniques embedded in curriculum and participation in competitions

* Offering project-based and open-ended assignments which allow for exploration of creativity and innovation

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

**District Response:** Rutherford County Schools uses a variety of assessments to determine individual student strengths and needs. These assessments are excellent instruments for guiding educators in differentiating classroom curriculum and instruction. Both elementary and middle schools use data from a variety of assessments to create leveled groups of students who range in academic ability. Teachers administer pre-assessments to match academic needs to drive curricular decisions.

The district's work with the Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) process in elementary schools has brought attention to differentiated curriculum and instruction. The district has a great deal of
resources to aide in the intervention process and seeks to match the needed interventions with available resources. The district is committed to providing professional development for teachers K-12 focusing on differentiated instruction. RCS will introduce MTSS components to the middle and high school levels during the 2019-2020 school year.

Teachers can differentiate at least four classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile:

* **Content** – what the student needs to learn or how the student will get access to the information

* **Process** – activities in which the student engages in order to make sense of or master the content

* **Product** – culminating projects that ask the student to rehearse, apply, and extend what he or she has learned in a unit

* **Learning environment** – the way the classroom works and feels

RCS currently uses the following student assessments:

* Individual student Kindergarten assessments

* Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA)

* mClass: Reading 3D (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

* NWEA MAP assessments (Measure of Academic Progress)

* Teacher made assessments (quizzes, tests, etc.)

* District Benchmarks

* EOGs, EOCs, and NCFEs

**Practice F**

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

**District Response:** Rutherford County Schools recognizes that advanced learners, especially those from underserved populations, need affective as well as cognitive learning support. We also understand that the social and emotional needs of AIG students are of crucial importance and are oftentimes overlooked in curricular and instructional practices. Gifted programming in our district continues to work on strategic planning to improve school services to nurture, recognize, and respond to the unique social and emotional development of all gifted learners. The blueprint for this planning uses the Guiding Principles template from the NAGC (National Association of Gifted Children) Gifted Program Standards. This plan includes staff development for regular classroom teachers, honors and AP teachers, counselors, and administrators.

Goal I: Gifted learners are provided with guidance and counseling to meet their unique needs. Counseling services are provided by a counselor familiar with the characteristics and social and
emotional needs of diverse gifted learners. Professional development for guidance counselors in working to meet the needs of gifted learners at all levels K-12 will continue to be offered.

Goal II: Gifted learners are provided with career guidance services. This college and career guidance should be appropriately different and delivered earlier than typical programs. Each high school employs a Career Development Coordinator who provides and coordinates career development services for students. The Robert and Janice McNair Educational Foundation works in a collaborative partnership with Rutherford County Schools to improve college access and success for students. The implementation of GEAR UP in secondary schools and the AP Academy in high schools also help assist with this goal.

Goal III: Underachieving and at-risk gifted students are served rather than exited from gifted programs. Gifted learners who do not demonstrate satisfactory performance in regular and/or gifted education classes should be provided with specialized intervention services. Removing gifted learners from gifted service options only furthers their disengagement. Underachieving gifted learners should be provided with specific guidance and counseling services that address the issues and problems related to underachievement. Mentoring and improved monitoring are key to this goal.

Goal IV: Gifted learners are provided with affective curriculum as part of their differentiated curriculum. A well-defined and implemented affective curriculum scope and sequence containing personal/social awareness and adjustment, academic planning, and vocational career awareness should be provided for ALL learners.

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

District Response: Talent development in (K-3) students needs to be cultivated through purposeful and intentional strategies offered through differentiated curriculum and instruction. This requires communication and collaboration between regular classroom teachers and AIG specialists. AIG specialists implement the G.E.A.R. Talent Development Program, as well as, assist regular classroom teachers with planning and creating differentiated curriculum and instruction. As a part of the program, AIG Specialists continually gather data through student observations during enriched, hands-on lessons. During this time RCS will continue the implementation of the U-STARS~PLUS program to strengthen the nurturing of talent development for the early recognition of high student performance. During the delivery of inclusion lessons in all kindergarten through third grade classrooms, data will be gathered through student observations and checklists. The results of this nurture and recognition will continue to lead to targeted intervention services for students exhibiting the need for targeted talent development.

AIG specialists will meet with teachers during their planning times to discuss students of outstanding potential. Student Portfolios will be used in Grades K-3 to create a body of evidence for potentially gifted students and can assist in the placement process.
Practice H
Develops and implements differentiated curriculum and instruction through collaboration among regular education teachers, AIG personnel, and other related instructional staff.

District Response: Collaboration among professional staff is perhaps the greatest source of sustained insight and growth for educators. Rutherford County Schools will continue to ensure collaboration among AIG personnel and other professional staff by continuing the integration of this practice into ongoing initiatives within the LEA.

Collaboration among AIG staff and other related instructional staff include:
* MIF and LIF curriculum development
* PLCs for elementary, middle, and high school subject areas
* MTSS curriculum development
* Camp Innovate curriculum development
* Professional development
* DEP/IDEP revision team (2019-2020)

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: The AIG Program for Rutherford County Schools has developed and documented student plans that articulate the differentiated curriculum and instruction opportunities matching a continuum of services for identified needs of K-12 AIG students. Communication of these plans are annually shared with parents, teachers, and administrators to ensure effective programming. To ensure a successful transition from elementary school to middle school, AIG family nights were implemented during the 2018-2019 school year. During this time, communication of the continuum of services and additional services available at middle school were provided.

RCS recognizes that current DEPs and IDEPs need to be more comprehensive and meaningful to all stakeholders involved. During the 2019-2020 school year the AIG coordinator, AIG specialist/facilitators, parent representatives, and other district and school level staff will evaluate and develop more comprehensive DEPs and IDEPs. Revised DEPs and IDEPs will be implemented by the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

Ideas to Strengthen the Standard: * Continue to build a resource library for AIG staff and classroom teachers at each school with differentiated lessons and other resources
* Continue to support key areas of transition for students (elementary to secondary)
* Continue to encourage the administration of pre-assessments to match academic need, drive curricular decisions, and support flexible grouping decisions
• Work more closely and consistently with special education teachers to allow for better service for students who are identified as twice exceptional

**Sources of Evidence:**
* Samples of differentiated curriculum units, lessons and activities K-12
* AP course audits
* Documentation of dual enrollment
* Documentation of AP course enrollment
* Samples of curriculum compacting
* Service learning projects that address future-ready content and skills
* Graduation projects
* Examples of preformative and post assessment data
* Use of leveled instruction
* District data (M-Class, MAP, EOG, EOC, ACT, SAT, AP, etc.)
* Strategic plan to promote school services which apply to unique social and emotional needs of gifted learners
* Guidance and counseling services for gifted learners
* Career guidance services for gifted students and how the AP Academy addresses this service
* Underachieving and at-risk services for gifted students
* Documentation of consistent implementation of U-STAR~PLUS
* Completed TOPS forms
* Signed DEPs/IDEPs
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 Rutherford County Schools director of secondary education oversees advanced programs and advanced courses offered K-12. The director, who holds AIG licensure, works with the AIG coordinator to help guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program.

The responsibilities of the gifted education coordinator include but are not limited to the following:

* Hold certification in gifted education
* Plan and guide the implementation of a comprehensive district-wide program for K-12 AIG students

* Plan and guide the implementation of gifted program service options

* Ensure that appropriate differentiated services are provided for AIG students

* Ensure that adequate funding is used for gifted education services

* Guide the implementation of the screening, identification, and placement process and is present at all Student Review Team meetings
* Integrate gifted programming into the general education program

* Stay abreast of issues, trends, methods, and policies for gifted education

* Communicate with parents and community regarding gifted education services

* Conduct monthly gifted education staff meetings

* Advocate for the continuous support of gifted education services

* Organize and facilitate the evaluation of the district plan for gifted education

* Plan, coordinate, and develop ongoing professional development in gifted education
* Serve as district contact for the North Carolina Advanced Placement Partnership
* Serve as district Advanced Placement Contact for College Board
* Plan, coordinate, and develop ongoing aspects for the Advanced Placement Academy including evening events for students and parents, grade-level field trips, and maintaining communications with
both students and parents throughout the school year

*Plan and coordinate district competitive events including the RCS District Spelling Bee, RCS Elementary Chess Tournament, RCS Middle School Battle of the Books, RCS Middle School District Quiz Bowl, RCS High School District Quiz Bowl, Isothermal Community College Junior Quiz Bowl Challenge, and Isothermal Community College Senior Quiz Bowl Challenge

*Plan and coordinate Camp Innovate for identified AIG students in Grades 3-5

*Plan, coordinate and develop ongoing aspects for Credit By Demonstrated Mastery

* Plan and coordinate efforts for Governor's School representation, 7th Grade Duke Talent Identification Program (TIP) participation, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM), and Summer Ventures opportunities

* Develop and maintain district informational tools, such as an AIG district website, form letters, etc.

* Meet and plan with regional coordinators of gifted education and state AIG consultants to stay informed of current issues in gifted education

* Facilitate biannual state (Department of Public Instruction) AIG headcount

* Participate in professional development offered at the district, state, and national levels to promote awareness of current research in gifted education

* Facilitate discussions and professional development in the areas of curriculum compacting and acceleration

**Practice B**

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

**District Response:** Rutherford County Schools employs elementary AIG Specialists whose job descriptions address the academic, social and emotional needs of AIG students. Currently, there are no AIG specialists at the middle school or high school level; rather that role is served by an AIG Facilitator at each school. Facilitators carry a full teaching load in addition to serving as the AIG facilitator for their school. Rutherford County Schools is actively pursuing avenues to help address the availability of more specialists at the elementary, middle, and high school areas.

Each elementary AIG specialist has the following responsibilities:

* Hold AIG certification

* Oversee implementation of the AIG local plan in all assigned schools and provide ongoing progress of practices of the AIG plan to the AIG coordinator

* Provide Math Innovation Days and Reading Innovation Days for AIG students in Grades 4 and 5 during the first five grading periods of each school year (These gifted enrichment days will be aligned to the NCSCOS and planning of such days will include the input from all elementary AIG specialists.)

* Provide lessons as a part of the G.E.A.R. program for all K-3 classrooms during each school year to foster talent development

* Offer demonstration (inclusion) lessons in K-5 regular education to promote critical and creative thinking. These lessons may include the implementation of U-STARS~PLUS materials, Jacob's Ladder and P.E.T.S.
* Serve in a coaching capacity, often modeling best practices and/or helping the teacher organize materials and lessons utilizing gifted methodology
* Serve as a resource for teachers within their own professional learning communities (grade level and department level meetings) and individual classrooms
* Attend at least one grade level meeting for Grade 4 and Grade 5 at all assigned school sites during both the fall and spring semesters to deliver professional development in the area of differentiation
* Provide weekly calendars online for teachers with schedules reflecting time for collaboration with classroom teachers and grade levels, scheduled professional development, as well as direct service to AIG students
* Implement the screening, identification, and placement of gifted students at assigned schools
* Coordinate AIG testing at school sites
* Plan and implement appropriate curricular offerings for AIG students in different grade levels
* Develop differentiated units of study based on the NCSCOS for use in gifted program options and by classroom teachers
* Oversee service-matched options in DEPs and IDEPs
* Collaborate with elementary instructional coaches and elementary technology facilitators on the delivery of gifted programming services including contributions to both the Literacy Instruction Framework (LIF) and Math Instruction Framework (MIF)
* Network with families about AIG students’ academic and social progress offering a meeting each year with the families of each identified AIG students
* Serve as a contact person for special events/programs/competitions
* Participate in appropriate professional development
* Maintain a school AIG website that aligns with the district's website rubric expectations
* Promote extracurricular opportunities for gifted students
* Advocating for gifted learners in all schools
* Maintain accurate student and program records in accordance to local and state policy
* Serve as lead teacher at the annual Camp Innovate Summer Enrichment (Grades 3-5)

Each middle/high school AIG facilitator has the following responsibilities:

* Hold AIG certification or local certificate

* Oversee implementation of the AIG local plan in assigned school and provide ongoing progress of the AIG plan in semester reports to the AIG coordinator
* Serve as a resource for teachers within their own professional learning communities (grade level and department level meetings) and individual classrooms
* Implement the screening, identification, and placement of gifted students at assigned schools

* Coordinate AIG testing at their school site

* Work with AIG coordinator to oversee service delivery options in DEPs and IDEPs
* Network with families about AIG students’ academic and social progress offering a meeting each year with the families of identified AIG students
* Serve as contact person for special events/programs/competitions
* Participate in appropriate professional development
* Facilitate consultation with AIG identified students AP Academy students/families for course selection and AP Academy activities
* Promote academic opportunities such as Advanced Placement courses, dual enrollment courses,
and Credit By Demonstrated Mastery (CDM)
*Use assessments and College Board predictors to recruit students not likely to enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses for the AP Academy program
*Promote extracurricular programming, including summer opportunities, to students and families
*Conduct student focus groups to get feedback on current issues and initiatives in gifted education

**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:** Rutherford County Schools is committed to both embracing and implementing the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction theme of "AIG All Day, Everyday." The AIG program will continue to conduct a series of professional development offerings to classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators. These offerings include general information sessions on gifted learners, differentiated instruction, and how to meet the social and emotional needs of students. Particular attention is spent on addressing the social and emotional needs of AIG learners at both the middle and high school level. This is a crucial component in our Advanced Placement Academy (high school programming). Rutherford County Schools continues to pursue placing AIG students in classrooms with teachers who have met the LEA’s professional development requirements for that position and/or have earned AIG certification.

The AIG program and other Rutherford County Schools initiatives will continue to offer professional development opportunities, which lead toward local LEA requirements of specialized professionals to teach AIG students. These specialized professionals include all PLUS teachers at the middle schools, honors and Advanced Placement teachers at the high schools, school counselors, and interested K-5 regular classroom teachers. Required professional development courses to earn a local AIG certificate from Rutherford County Schools will include:

1. Introduction to Gifted Education: Characteristics, Nature, and Needs of Gifted Learners
2. Differentiation/Instructional Practices/Methods and Models
3. Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Students

These courses will be taught by certified AIG specialists, facilitators, coordinator, and/or outside experts in the field. Interested teachers in Rutherford County Schools may also affiliate with a number of UNC universities for online training programs, which provide AIG certification and/or advanced degrees in gifted education.

Teachers of Advanced Placement courses will be encouraged to attend Advanced Placement Summer Institutes every 4-5 years to ensure fidelity in teaching their assigned AP course. AP One-Day Workshops will also be made available to AP teachers as funds allow.
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: Rutherford County Schools places AIG students in classrooms with teachers who have met the LEA's professional development requirements for that position and/or have earned AIG certification. The district makes a concerted effort to meet the guidelines requiring teachers of AIG students to participate in local professional development so they may meet the district's requirements for a local certificate. Elementary principals are encouraged to utilize cluster grouping of AIG students in order to provide more direct service. Schools are encouraged to identify strategies relating to AIG students in their School Improvement Plans where appropriate.

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

District Response: Quality professional development must ensure that adult learning includes time for reflection, follow-up, and collaboration in order for new instructional strategies to be implemented appropriately. AIG specialists/facilitators have been involved in gifted education refresher seminars, differentiated instruction workshops and attendance at the state gifted conference. The AIG specialists/facilitators are expected to offer ongoing professional development at their respected schools. AIG specialists will continue to collaborate and plan with instructional coaches and technology facilitators on the delivery of gifted programming services including contributions to both the Literacy Instruction Framework (LIF) and Math Instruction Framework (MIF).

RCS is committed to giving all employees opportunities to plan, implement and refine the applications of their professional development learning and be able to share with their peers. RCS will continue to support attendance at the North Carolina Association of Gifted and Talented Conference and any other local conferences or workshops that pertain to the gifted education community.

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

District Response: Rutherford County Schools continues to provide opportunities for AIG specialists and other teachers to plan, implement, and refine applications of their professional development learning by offering:
* District-wide professional development courses taught by certified AIG specialists during District Professional Development Days
* Facilitation of periodic Professional Learning Communities (PLC) round-table meetings conducted at all levels
* Creation of a district-wide AIG resource website with grade level appropriate materials created by AIG specialists and shared with all RCS teachers
* Creation of gifted enrichment resources added to the Literacy Instruction Framework (LIF) and Math Instruction Framework (MIF) at the elementary level
* Monthly AIG staff meetings

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:** * Continue growth and development of professional development offerings
* Continue collaborating with instructional coaches and technology facilitators to provide professional development opportunities for teachers
* Survey all certified staff and administrators on possible in-service training topics.

**Sources of Evidence:** * An AIG licensed educator employed full-time to coordinate the local AIG program
* Job descriptions of AIG coordinator and AIG specialists/facilitators
* Coordinator and specialist/facilitator calendars reflecting responsibilities
* Agendas of Instructional Support Team meetings
* Agendas of monthly AIG staff meetings
* Yearly purchase orders for advanced resources
* Clear roles and responsibilities for AIG personnel and other related educators including classroom teachers, exceptional children's personnel, counselors, and school administrators
* District list of AIG certified teachers and local certificate earners
* Professional development sign in sheets
* AP course syllabi
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: Developing partnerships relies on effective communication and dissemination of appropriate literature. Several plan practices are provided to ensure that parents/families and the community receive communication regarding appropriate services for AIG students. RCS values partnerships with parents, families, organizations, and the community at large. We recognize that successful collaborative partnerships determines our overall program success.

AIG Family Nights are held at the end of the year to provide parents with insights and opportunities to understand RCS gifted programming options as students transition from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school. During these evening events, parents are provided with resources and strategies for supporting their gifted children academically, socially, and emotionally.

One essential aspect of the AP Academy program is the Evening Events Series held each semester. These district events, held 6-10 times each year, showcase opportunities for students and families. Past events have included but are not limited to:
* Motivational speakers
* Information nights for Governor’s School
* Information nights for NCSSM
* Information nights for Summer Ventures and additional summer program opportunities
* Presentations from nearby IHE's
* College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC)

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: There are multiple avenues through which RCS supplies information to AIG stakeholders about the local plan and program. The RCS AIG plan is shared on the district website. The AIG website has been rebranded and updated to include information regarding identification, services, and resources, Camp Innovate, AP Academy, and Credit By Demonstrated Mastery comprehensive site. In addition, program publications, including this Plan, are available online and at each school.
AIG information is shared at District Parent Advisory Committee meetings, at district leadership meetings, and with the local Board of Education.

**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:** Rutherford County Schools is committed to involving parents/families and community members of diverse populations. Currently, the AIG program seeks guidance and input from the District Parent Advisory Committee and the district Teacher Advisory Council. The AIG Program will work to establish a separate advisory group whose sole focus is the AIG program.

The AIG Advisory Group will meet periodically throughout the academic school year. The task of this group will be to advocate for gifted education and to offer continuity in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the local AIG program and Plan. The AIG coordinator will organize and be chairperson for these meetings. The duties and responsibilities of the AIG Advisory Committee will include but are not limited to the following:

* Review annually the local plan for the education of gifted students, including revisions
* Determine the extent to which the local plan for the previous year was implemented
* Develop annual goals and priorities
* Represent diversity in the community
* Encourage a collaborative relationship between school personnel, central office personnel, and the community
* Become knowledgeable about current programs, research, and best practices in gifted education and its relationship with general education
* Focus attention on issues relative to improving the educational services for gifted students.

**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:** Rutherford County Schools implements a comprehensive language translation service to inform parents/families and the community of available opportunities for students. The AIG program uses this service for AIG forms, AIG brochures, and AIG plan translations. All screening, identification, and placement documents are translated into Spanish.
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: Rutherford County Schools views partnerships as a powerful way to enhance and gain support for programs and services. Collaboration to share and promote a positive vision of the AIG program's purpose and goals continues to be a district-wide commitment.

Each year the AIG program reaches out to local businesses and other entities to secure donations and additional funding to support program needs. In March of 2019, the program was awarded $23,000 in funds from Facebook's Community Action Program. These funds will help support the cost of Camp Innovate (a new summer enrichment opportunity for elementary students making its debut in Summer 2019). In addition, funds will cover the purchase of licenses for Renzulli Learning (an online gifted programming resource).

The partnership with the local community college, Isothermal Community College, affords middle and high school students boundless opportunities. These range from intentional programs that seek to work with students to secure college attendance to summer programming in STEM.

In order to develop innovative high school curriculum concentration pathways, Rutherford County Schools continues its strategic planning initiative in collaboration with Isothermal Community College and local business/industry leaders through the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce. These pathways identify sequences of high school and community college courses that will enable students to earn community college certificates, diplomas, and degrees while in high school.

RCS will continue to leverage its partnership with the McNair Educational Foundation to personalize career and college readiness activities through individual, community-based mentoring for every high school student.

Ideas to Strengthen the Standard: * Continue to update AIG district website as the primary communication tool
* Seek partnership with our only local IHE, Gardner-Webb University, in the areas of gifted certification and potential summer programming collaboration
* Continue to translate AIG Information into Spanish and ensure that interpreters/translators are available at AIG parents meetings as needed
* Continue university and community college partnerships

Sources of Evidence: * Programs from events (AIG Family Nights, AP Academy Evening Events, etc.)
* Information posted on websites (to include AIG plan and program documents with Spanish translation)
* AIG Advisory Group reflecting diversity of families
* Documentation and agendas of AIG Advisory Group meetings
* Translated documents
* Facebook Community Action Program Data
* Increased involvement with New Century Scholars Program and GEAR UP
* Robert and Janice McNair Educational Foundation partnerships (mentoring, 7th grade College Knowledge Expo at ICC, 8th grade Connect Tour, and 12th grade College and Career 101 Conference at ICC)
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: Rutherford County Schools has maintained a local AIG plan in accordance with state legislation and policy. The plan has been reviewed and revised every three years. Using the North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards (State Board of Education Policy ACIG-000-June 2018) and SBE policy (N.C.G.S. 115C-150.5-.8 {Article 9B}), the district’s written plan reflects the statewide framework for quality AIG programming.

The RCS Board of Education reviews, provides recommendations, and approves the plan before submission to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

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: Rutherford County Schools employs a full-time AIG coordinator to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program. The AIG coordinator prepares an annual report detailing progress toward successful implementation of the AIG plan for review by the Board of Education, the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, members of the Instructional Services Department, and all other stakeholders. The report articulates the status of current programming and provides formative and summative evaluation reports. This report is derived from data and feedback received from a variety of resources at the school and district level including the elementary AIG specialists, middle school AIG facilitators and high school AIG facilitators.

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: According to Article 9B (115C-150.5) of the North Carolina General Assembly, all funds allocated to local LEAs for gifted education must be used for the direct services of the local AIG program. Rutherford County Schools adheres to this allocation process. AIG Funding supports but is not limited to the following areas:
* Personnel
* Professional Development
* Special/Innovative Programs
* Instructional and Curriculum Products
* Academic Competitions

The AIG coordinator works with the director of secondary education and the district finance officer to develop a yearly budget that aligns to the current AIG plan. The AIG coordinator will continue to advocate for additional funding sources, donations, grants, and other partnerships in order to effectively meet the needs of AIG students at all levels.

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

**District Response:** Through collaboration with the Accountability and Information Technology departments, the AIG coordinator will collect data to track, monitor, and analyze AIG student progress at all schools. The following information for AIG students will be collected each year to drive and inform AIG programming district-wide:

* CogAT Scores and Profile Abilities
* EOG scores
* EOC scores
* AP scores
* ACT and SAT scores
* Duke TIP scores
* AIG student dropouts
* AIG student disaggregation by gender, ethnicity
* Underachieving AIG students
* School and individual teacher EVAAS data in regards to AIG student growth

The AIG coordinator will also gather, analyze, and share annual dropout data for AIG students and work to create a systematic plan of interventions and supports to help at-risk AIG students graduate successfully.
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: In order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the district's AIG identification practices, it is important to maintain an awareness of the demographics of our AIG program. To promote continual improvement and equitable access to AIG programming, the district will continue to collect school-based AIG population data. In addition, the AIG coordinator will continue to maintain data representing the demographics of students served in the district AIG program.

In order to continue the pursuit of providing both equality and equity in AIG programming, RCS will use the upcoming plan cycle to investigate the use of individual school norms to identify potential gifted students. RCS recognizes that the district is vast and varied in terms of student access, opportunities, and community needs. To ensure equitable AIG educational programming throughout the district, RCS will continue to evaluate and develop programming options for services and identification to best meet the needs of underrepresented populations.

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

District Response: The Human Resources Department of Rutherford County Schools maintains licensure information for all employees. The department frequently updates files on the credentials of all Rutherford County personnel, including personnel serving AIG students.

The AIG coordinator maintains documentation for teachers who have completed the AIG local certificate and AP Summer Institute trainings.

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: The local AIG program encourages feedback from all students, parents, teachers and administrators regarding the quality of the AIG program. This is a crucial aspect of any program to ensure strength and fidelity.

Opportunities for students, parents/guardians, teachers, and other stakeholders to provide feedback on the quality and effectiveness of the local AIG program include but are not limited to the following:

* Initial placement meeting

* Annual DEP/IDEP meetings
* Parent meetings and conferences

* Student surveys
* Annual survey that addresses program strengths and areas of improvement, as well as critical issues that might influence program standards

* District AIG Advisory Group

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

**District Response:** The Plan for Gifted Education in Rutherford County has received positive review comments from DPI for each of its past seven writings and revisions. The AIG Department collects data from multiple sources as indicated in Standard 6, Practice d, for use in reviewing and revising the local AIG plan and program for continuous improvement.

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

**District Response:** An AIG Annual Report is made available to all stakeholders and the community at large through multiple means of communication. In addition, visually enhanced program review data and yearly evaluation data is shared periodically at open RCS Board of Education meetings.

**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:** Rutherford County Schools has clearly established written policies that safeguard the rights of AIG students and their parents/families. These policies ensure that each student’s AIG file contains a signed Permission to Evaluate form, a signed Placement form, and a signed DEP or IDEP form.

The AIG program goals, objectives, and service delivery options of Rutherford County Schools should be clearly communicated to parents and guardians. In the event that a disagreement exists between parents or guardians and Rutherford County Schools when a child is not identified as an academically and/or intellectually gifted student or concerning the appropriateness of services offered to the AIG student, the following procedures to resolve the disagreement will be followed:
Step I.
The first attempt to reach an agreement will be with the School Review Team (SRT).

1. The parent/guardian may make a request in writing to the school principal for a conference with the SRT to discuss concerns about identification and/or implementation of the child's Differentiated Education Plan (DEP).

2. The SRT, including the school principal, reviews the student's AIG records. The committee may gather additional information about the student from teacher(s) and/or parents/guardians as needed.

3. The SRT grants the conference within ten school days of receipt of the request and responds to the parent/guardian in writing within five school days after the conference.

Step II.
If the disagreement is not resolved with the SRT, the parents may request an administrative review at the system level.

1. The parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the SRT in writing to the director of secondary education and/or the AIG coordinator within ten days of receiving the written response from the SRT. The parent/guardian must explain in writing the concerns and specific points of disagreement with the SRT.

2. The director of secondary education and/or the AIG coordinator will convene a panel to review the disagreement within five school days of receipt of the appeal. The panel will include the Superintendent (or designee) and other members at the discretion of the director and/or coordinator. The AIG coordinator will respond in writing within five school days to the parent/guardian and principal concerning the outcome of the review.

Step III.
If agreement cannot be reached administratively, the parents/guardians may appeal to the RCS Board of Education. The Board will offer a written decision to the parents within 20 school days.

Step IV.
In the event that the local grievance procedure fails to resolve the disagreement, the parents/guardians may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the North Carolina General Statutes. This must be done within 20 calendar days after receipt of the written decision of the Board of Education. According to the law, "The scope of the hearing shall be limited to
1. whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an AIG student, or

2. whether the local plan developed under G.S. 115C-150.7 has been implemented properly with regard to the child."

Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusions of law. Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decisions of the administrative law judge becomes final, is binding on the parties, and is not subject to further review under Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. Legal fees are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Transfer students are ensured rapid attention to their placement needs K-12. School data managers should inform the AIG coordinator when an identified AIG student enrolls. AIG records from any previous schools are requested by the AIG coordinator. Upon receipt of the records, the AIG coordinator or SRT reviews and makes appropriate recommendations. RCS accepts scores on assessment instruments used by other school districts or trained personnel outside the school district provided these instruments are reliably sound. Students are given the option to take the assessments used in the district should any questions arise. In RCS, students are not exited from the AIG program without due cause.

**Ideas to Strengthen the Standard:**
* Develop a plan with the Department of Accountability and Department of Information Technology to analyze enrollment of AIG students; identify students that dropout of school; and gather, analyze and share AIG student growth and achievement data
* Continue to evaluate equity and excellence across the district
* Monitor progress of AIG plan implementation each year
* Determine if changes are needed to the AIG plan mid-cycle
* Gather feedback on a yearly basis with surveys to students, parents, teachers, and administrators

**Sources of Evidence:**
* RCS AIG plan with NCDPI review comments
* A full-time licensed AIG coordinator is employed to monitor the AIG plan implementation
* AIG state budget and expense allocations
* Disaggregation of student data for growth and achievement
* Annual report for the AIG program
* Current files reflecting the credentials of personnel serving AIG students (AIG licensure and local certificate)
* Calendar of placement meetings, annual DEP/IDEP meetings
* Parent, teacher, administrator, and school personnel surveys
* Policy to Resolve Disagreements (website and brochure)
Glossary (optional):

Appendix (optional):
AIG Identification Flowchart .pdf (Appendix - Standard 1)
Sample Pathways Report.pdf (Appendix - Standard 1)
AIG Local Plan Overview FINAL.pdf (Appendix - Standard 1:2:3:4:5:6)
Battle of the Books program .pdf (Appendix - Standard 2)
NEW RCS AIG WEBSITE.mp4 (Appendix - Standard 2)
RCS Genius Hour .mp4 (Appendix - Standard 2)
spelling bee program .pdf (Appendix - Standard 2)
AP ACADEMY brochure.pdf (Appendix - Standard 2:3)
CAMP INNOVATE.mp4 (Appendix - Standard 2:3)
Camp Press Release .pdf (Appendix - Standard 2:3)
ap academy winter spring events.pdf (Appendix - Standard 2:3)
final camp brochure .pdf (Appendix - Standard 2:3)
AIG Family Night Program .pdf (Appendix - Standard 5)
Board Agenda.pdf (Local Board Approval Document)