

Overview: Mission/Vision Statement and Funding

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

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Watauga County Schools has developed this local AIG plan based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBE, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021). These Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide Public School Units (PSUs) to develop, implement, and monitor 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 aligned to NC's AIG legislation, Article 9B (N. C. G. S. 115C150.5). These best practices help to clarify the standard, describe what a PSU should have in place, and guide PSUs to improve their programs. In an effort to continue to transform AIG programs and align to the NC AIG Program Standards, each PSU has participated in a self-assessment process of their local AIG program, involving multiple stakeholders. The data gathered during this process has guided PSUs in their development of this local AIG plan for 2022-2025. This local AIG plan has been approved by the LEA's local board of education or charter school's board of directors and sent to NC DPI for comment.

For 2022-2025, the Watauga County Schools local AIG plan is as follows:

* Mission and/or Vision Statement(s)

WCS AIG Program Vision:

The WCS AIG Program will advocate for, support, and challenge all gifted students to maximize their potential.

WCS AIG Program Mission:

Through collaboration with the whole school community, the WCS AIG Program will provide rigorous, relevant, engaging, equitable practices designed to meet the varying academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of our gifted students. Gifted services in WCS will cultivate students' skills in communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and leadership, empowering them for future citizenship, leadership, and lifelong learning.

FUNDING FOR LOCAL AIG PROGRAM (as of 2022)

State Funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other Funding
* \$ 267,433.00	* \$ 0.00	* \$ 0.00	* \$ 236,247.00

Standard 1: Student Identification

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

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 both screening and referral processes that lead to AIG identification at all grade levels. Provides opportunities for every student to show their strengths and talents.

The screening and referral processes of the Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program are rooted in reliably and equitably identifying gifted students. (See Standard 1, Practice C for more detailed information on how WCS ensures equity in its AIG Program.) To this end, the program relies on the research-based best practices of universal screening and multiple indicators of giftedness. Regardless of socioeconomic status, cultural or ethnic background, physical or linguistic ability, or other demographic factors, all WCS students are included in the AIG search. In fact, WCS believes that twice-exceptional learners exist, and that these students are not excluded from AIG screening, referral, or identification.

In grades K-2, students are typically not formally identified as gifted out of considerations for young students' rapidly changing academic, intellectual, and social-emotional development. However, the talent development process in these grades (described in detail in Standard 2, Practice A and Standard 3, Practice G) provides AIG Specialists a regular opportunity to directly interact with all K-2 students and their teachers in order to observe potential gifted characteristics. Through this process, AIG Specialists may use student work samples, student academic interest, teacher and/or principal recommendations, and formal observation scales completed by the classroom teacher or AIG Specialist to indicate a need for referral.

In the fall semester of grade 3, all students are offered the opportunity to take an aptitude assessment. (As of the 2021-2022 school year, the aptitude test used by the WCS AIG Program is the Cognitive Abilities Test, also known as the

CogAT.) Parents/guardians may opt out of this process if desired, especially when a student already has a current Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) on record. Research consistently supports this universal screening practice as a key means of reducing bias and ensuring equity in gifted identification (Card & Giuliano, 2016, p. 13683). AIG Specialists review these assessment results to determine which students should be referred to Excel Teams for review; any student scoring a 90th percentile or greater on a standardized aptitude assessment composite or subscore will be referred to the school Excel Team, and AIG Specialists may also refer students who score below the 90th percentile if other data may indicate giftedness or a need for additional assessment.

In grades 4 through 8, historical data serves as a source of screening information for all students. WCS AIG Specialists continue to examine local and state student data already available in the district and regularly conduct searches for potential AIG students; as part of this search, AIG Specialists can request additional testing (e.g. CogAT readministration, individual psychologist-administered assessments, etc). Qualitative and quantitative data that could generate an Excel Team referral may include (but is not limited to):

- Aptitude assessment scores (e.g. from the CogAT, or, when appropriate, scores from alternative assessments such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children [WISC]);
- Course grades;
- End-of-Grade test scores;
- Other formative and benchmark/interim assessment data;
- Observations from teachers, support staff, and/or other WCS professionals as documented using the Gifted Behavior Scale.
- Portfolios (e.g. work samples)

Classroom teachers and school principals at all grades may also refer students for Excel Team review by completing the Gifted Behavior Scale. Prior to accepting these referrals, each school's AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the District AIG Coordinator, administrator tasked with gifted education, and/or School Counselors) will conduct a beginning-of-year AIG awareness training that addresses the following topics:

- The definition of giftedness;

- Characteristics and needs of gifted students;
- The service delivery plan for meeting the needs of gifted students;
- Best Search Practices (see Appendix A);
- AIG screening, referral, and identification procedures.

Parents/guardians who feel their child may be gifted should discuss the nomination process with the student's classroom teacher(s) and their school's AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, their student's School Counselor). This does not necessarily guarantee that the parent/guardian request will lead to an Excel Team review.

AIG Specialists collect all available data in order to develop a comprehensive learner profile for students heading to the Excel Team. This body of evidence will be reviewed by the Excel Team, resulting in more informed placement decisions. Ultimately, this learner profile will showcase a student's strengths and talents. Beginning in the 2022/23 school year, the District AIG Coordinator will collect and monitor screening, referral, and identification demographics to ensure fair, equitable, and consistent processes occur for all student populations district wide.

*** 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.

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program strives for comprehensive, holistic evaluation of student referrals for gifted identification. The reliable collection of multiple indicators of giftedness and their careful, consistent consideration by Excel Teams is essential to equitably identifying gifted students.

As student referrals are submitted throughout the school year, the school's AIG Specialist coordinates the collection of any additional data necessary for informed evaluation, documents this data using the Multiple Indicators of Giftedness form, and brings referrals to the school Excel Team. Excel Team membership is as follows:

- K-8 schools have standing Excel Teams made up of, at minimum, the AIG Specialist, the principal (or her/his designee) and classroom teachers representing the school's grade spans (e.g. K-2, 3-5, 6-8) and/or subject areas. In most cases, the K-8 Excel Team has a minimum of five members.

- Watauga High School (WHS) and the Watauga Innovation Academy (WIA) currently convene ad hoc Excel Teams as needed to evaluate referrals or previously-identified student transfers. These teams consist of the District AIG Coordinator, the principal (or her/his designee, e.g. the assistant principal tasked with gifted education), the grade level counselor, and subject-area classroom teacher representatives.

As its members deem necessary, Excel Teams may also include in their meetings other appropriate personnel. This may include professionals such as the nominating teacher, Exceptional Children's (EC) or English Learner (EL) teacher, School Counselor, School Psychologist, and/or School Social Worker. These persons may serve in an ad hoc capacity or become standing Excel Team members. Additionally, the District AIG Coordinator can serve on request as an ad hoc Excel Team member and may elect to observe and provide feedback on any Excel Team meeting.

Under the AIG Specialist's leadership, Excel Teams examine qualitative and quantitative student data to determine whether students should be identified and served. The possible gifted identifications and criteria for each are outlined in the following sections and are also contained in Appendix A, Identification Flowchart and Criteria.

Academically Gifted in Math (AM), Reading (AR), or both subject areas (AG).

Students in grades 3-12 may be identified as Academically Gifted in Math, Reading, or both based on compelling evidence in these subject areas as demonstrated through a combination of the following criteria:

- 90th percentile or greater quantitative (for AM), verbal (for AR), or both (for AG) aptitude assessment score (or, depending on how scores are reported for the assessment used, a corresponding index or subscore composite accurately depicting aptitude in Math or Reading);
- 93rd percentile or greater rank on the relevant subject-area North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) or End-of-Course (EOC) tests or PreACT/ACT subtests (excluding the PreACT/ACT composite);
- Course grades in the relevant subject area of 90% or greater;
- Score of at least 130 on the Gifted Behavior Scale.

Intellectually Gifted (IG)

By contrast with academically gifted designations, intellectual giftedness is not contingent on performance in a specific subject. The WCS AIG Program defines intellectual giftedness as exceptional aptitude in the absence of compelling achievement in a specific academic subject area. These students exhibit a disparity between their significant potential to achieve and actual achievement. As a result, services for these students should focus not only on engaging their aptitude through rigorous pursuit of personal interests, but also meeting whatever social, emotional, or other needs cause this disparity so they can perform academically at a level consistent with their aptitude.

To be identified as IG, student data must meet all of the following criteria:

- 98th percentile or greater quantitative, verbal, nonverbal, and/or composite score (or, depending on how scores are reported for the assessment used, a corresponding index or subscore composite) on both group and individual aptitude assessments (e.g. both the CogAT and the WISC);
- Average or below-average subject-area achievement as shown by course grades and EOG/EOC or PreACT/ACT scores;
- Score of at least 130 on the Gifted Behavior Scale.

Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI)

This designation refers to highly gifted students who show exceptional elements of both academic and intellectual giftedness as demonstrated through a combination of the following criteria. Depending on the available data, students may be identified and served as AI in Math, Reading, or both subject areas.

- 98th percentile or greater quantitative, verbal, nonverbal, and/or composite individual aptitude assessment scores (or, depending on how scores are reported for the assessment used, a corresponding index or subscore composite);
- 98th percentile or greater rank on the relevant subject-area North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) or End-of-Course (EOC) tests or PreACT/ACT subtests (excluding the PreACT/ACT composite);
- Course grades in the relevant subject area of 93% or greater;

- Score of at least 145 on the Gifted Behavior Scale.

In grades K-2, students are typically not formally identified as gifted out of consideration for young students' rapidly changing academic, intellectual, and social-emotional development. However, students in this grade span may be formally identified as Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI) when a combination of the criteria below indicate a compelling need for advanced differentiation. These criteria are based on those for AI identification in grades 3 and above but differ slightly due to the data sources available in these grades.

- 98th percentile or greater quantitative, verbal, nonverbal, and/or composite individual aptitude assessment scores (or, depending on how scores are reported for the assessment used, a corresponding index or subscore composite);
- Score at least three years above grade level expectations on a standardized individual achievement test in all areas for grade acceleration, or two years above grade level in the subject to be accelerated;
- K-2 Gifted Behavior Scale scores of 200 or greater from the classroom teacher and AIG Specialist;
- AIG Specialist, classroom teacher, and principal recommendations documenting anecdotal evidence of social-emotional and academic levels as well as exceptional student interest;
- Portfolio of work samples demonstrating exceptional, consistent ability to work with course content beyond factual recall (e.g. to creatively synthesize knowledge from disparate sources, to independently apply learned content in new contexts).

To complement these criteria, Excel Teams may be informed by other qualitative data, including observations, recommendations, and/or work samples indicating high student interest, motivation, and ability to work with course content beyond factual recall (e.g. to creatively synthesize knowledge from disparate sources, to independently apply learned content in new contexts). This data may come from an EC or EL teacher in situations where the student might be twice-exceptional. These informal data sources are intended to highlight a student's potential to achieve. Ultimately, the WCS AIG identification criteria are intended to focus on multiple ways to see a student's strengths, rather than create barriers for identification.

In reviewing any student's data, Excel Teams follow the research-based best practice of using multiple indicators of giftedness (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007, p. 235-246). At no point will Excel Teams use a single data point in and of itself as a reason to exclude a student from gifted identification. Yet, in very rare cases, any single criterion, if

superior, may indicate a need for gifted identification and services. Again, Excel Teams look at the complete learner profile when making a determination for gifted identification.

Following careful deliberation, the Excel Team may choose one of the following three routes regarding a student's nomination:

1. Continue regular education services because available data does not indicate a need for differentiation beyond the regular educational program.
2. Place the student on a wait-and-watch list in order to gather additional data (e.g. teacher observations, work samples, assessment data, etc) for informed decision-making. In this case, Excel Teams should clearly articulate (a) what additional data will be gathered and by whom, and (b) on what timeline that data will be gathered and discussed.
3. Identify the student as academically and/or intellectually gifted (AM, AR, AG, IG, or AI) and determine appropriate services.

The school's AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the principal's designee [e.g. assistant principal]) maintains a roster of all nominations and Excel Team decisions and also notifies the parent/guardian of any Excel Team decision resulting in their child being identified as gifted. Documentation of parent involvement is required for placement in any AIG service delivery options. (See Standard 1, Practice F for more information on documentation.) The AIG Specialist will obtain parent/guardian permission if additional testing is requested by the Excel Team. Parents/guardians have the right to appeal Excel Team decisions as outlined in Standard 6, Practice J.

Students entering WCS who have been previously identified as gifted by a North Carolina public school, as evidenced by the "AIG Program" tab in PowerSchool SIS records, will automatically be enrolled in the WCS AIG program. The AIG Specialist may choose to bring these transfer students to the Excel Team in order to help determine the most appropriate service delivery option. As a reminder, documentation of parent involvement is required for placement in any AIG service delivery options. (See Standard 1, Practice F for more information on documentation.) Students entering WCS who have been previously identified as gifted outside of a North Carolina public school, including all charter and homeschool students, must meet the criteria as presented in the WCS AIG Plan for formal identification. Excel Teams will reach a decision when all required documentation has been received and reviewed but no later than 45 school days from the date of transfer. In this situation, the AIG Specialist will notify the parent/guardian once the Excel Team has reached a decision.

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*** 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.

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program is committed to equitably screening for, referring, and identifying gifted learners from any background. All educators involved with the WCS AIG Program have a duty to understand WCS demographics and respond to them by applying research-based best practices for ensuring equity.

Understanding district-wide demographics is necessary to examine equitable practices in the WCS AIG Program. This data from the three academic years between 2020 and 2022 is described in the following section and also tabulated in Appendix B. Data from April of each academic year is used since all AIG programs in North Carolina submit an official headcount of gifted students to the NC Department of Public Instruction annually on April 30. District-wide demographics refer to students in grades 3-12 since these are the grades in which students are identified as gifted (except for rare cases in grades K-2).

As of April 2020, WCS had 3813 students enrolled in grades 3-12. Demographics of this group were as follows:

- Gender
 - 50.2% female
 - 49.8% male
- Race / Ethnicity
 - 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 1.9% Asian
 - 1.3% Black or African American

- 9.9% Hispanic
- 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 3.3% two or more ethnicities
- 83.2% White
- Subgroups
 - 33.5% were economically disadvantaged (i.e. eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch)
 - 3.0% received English Learner services
 - 17.3% received Exceptional Children's services
 - 19.1% were identified as gifted

By comparison, the demographics of the of the 729 students identified gifted as of April 30, 2020 were as follows:

- Gender
 - 55.1% female
 - 44.9% male
- Race / ethnicity
 - 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 1.8% Asian
 - 0.3% Black or African American
 - 3.2% Hispanic

- 0.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 3.2% two or more ethnicities
- 91.4% White
- Subgroups
 - 0.0% also received English Learner services
 - 2.5% also received Exceptional Children's services

As of April 2021, WCS had 3637 students enrolled in grades 3-12. Demographics of this group were as follows:

- Gender
 - 50.2% female
 - 49.8% male
- Race / ethnicity
 - 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 1.8% Asian
 - 1.3% Black or African American
 - 9.9% Hispanic
 - 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders
 - 3.1% two or more ethnicities
 - 83.4% White

▪ Subgroups

- 27.2% were economically disadvantaged
- 4.7% received English Learner services
- 17.6% received Exceptional Children's services
- 18.3% were identified as gifted

By comparison, the demographics of the of the 665 students identified gifted as of April 30, 2021 were as follows:

▪ Gender

- 55.3% female
- 44.7% male

▪ Race / ethnicity

- 0.2% American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 1.8% Asian
- 0.3% Black or African American
- 3.8% Hispanic
- 0.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders
- 3.2% two or more ethnicities
- 90.8% White

▪ Subgroups

- 0.0% also received English Learner services
- 1.7% also received Exceptional Children's services

As of April 2022, WCS had 3581 students enrolled in grades 3-12. Demographics of this group were as follows:

- Gender
 - 49.9% female
 - 50.1% male
- Race / ethnicity
 - 0.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 1.8% Asian
 - 1.3% Black or African American
 - 10.1% Hispanic
 - 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders
 - 3.9% two or more ethnicities
 - 82.4% White
- Subgroups
 - 24.2% were economically disadvantaged
 - 4.1% received English Learner services
 - 17.3% received Exceptional Children's services

- 14.9% were identified as gifted

By comparison, the demographics of the of the 714 students identified gifted as of April 30, 2022 were as follows:

- Gender
 - 54.8% female
 - 45.2% male
- Race / ethnicity
 - 0.1% American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 2.0% Asian
 - 0.3% Black or African American
 - 4.1% Hispanic
 - 0.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders
 - 3.5% two or more ethnicities
 - 90.0% White
- Subgroups
 - 8.7% were economically disadvantaged
 - 0.0% also received English Learner services
 - 1.7% also received Exceptional Children's services

While this data shows a generally stable makeup both of the overall WCS student population and its gifted students, proportional comparison between district-wide and AIG Program demographics reveals the following problematic

areas:

- Overrepresentation of white students. White students continue to be overrepresented in the gifted population at a growing rate, exceeding the total percentage of white WCS students by 8.2% in April 2020, 7.4% in April 2021, and 7.6% in April 2022. The presence of this overrepresentation in a racial majority is concerning, made more so in light of its steady trend since 2020.
- Underrepresentation of Hispanic students. By contrast with white students, Hispanic students are historically underrepresented in the WCS gifted population, falling behind the total percentage of Hispanic WCS students by 6.7% in April 2020, 6.1% in April 2021, and 6.0% in 2022. Although this trend is moving in a more representative direction, it is still a significant area for growth.
- Underrepresentation of English Learners. In the past three sets of AIG Spring headcount data, there are no English Learners that are also identified as gifted.
- Overrepresentation of females. Female gifted learners outpaced females in the WCS 3-12 population as a whole by 4.9% in April 2020, 5.1% in April 2021, and 4.9% in April 2022.
- Underrepresentation of economically disadvantaged students. This is the first year data was available for the percent of AIG students who are also economically disadvantaged. In April 2022, 8.7% of AIG students were also economically disadvantaged, compared to 24.2% of total students in the district. This gap is perhaps even wider because many parents/guardians did not complete the free and reduced lunch forms for the 2021/22 school year. All students in WCS were provided free breakfast and lunch due to a federal program offered in the 2021/22 school year.
- Potential underrepresentation of twice-exceptional learners. In April 2022, 1.7% of AIG students were also identified as Exceptional Children. There were 17.3% of students in the district who are identified as Exceptional Children.

Taken together, this data suggests the need to critically examine equitable screening, referral, and identification practices as they pertain to Hispanic, English Learner, male, and economically disadvantaged, and twice-exceptional students. Further demographic analysis to examine intersectionalities of these groups will also be necessary. It is also worth noting that race/ethnicity figures might be skewed, in part, because there are known instances of parents/guardians incorrectly reporting this information on enrollment paperwork. There are, however, some practices already in place to help address issues of equity.

A fundamental strategy for ensuring equity in the WCS AIG Program is universal screening for gifted potential. Research consistently supports universal screening as a reliable practice for equitable identification (Card & Giuliano, 2016, p. 13683). While universal screening cannot on its own solve issues of equity in gifted education, it is a consistently effective practice that is relatively easy to implement. As described in Standard 1, Practice A, all WCS third graders are provided the opportunity to take an aptitude assessment as part of the AIG screening process, ensuring AIG Specialists have access to and examine this data for every third grade student. The WCS AIG Program is committed to the continued use of universal screening and will investigate opportunities to expand this practice.

AIG Specialists may collaborate with School Psychologists and/or other specialists to use and interpret alternative assessments appropriate to a given student's demographics, which Excel Teams can request in order to gain potentially more accurate and informative student data. Nonverbal assessments, for example, remove barriers for students not yet proficient in speaking English, thus more accurately representing their ability. Additionally, the WCS AIG Program provides assessment administration directions in a student's native language whenever possible.

While the majority of our AIG students are referred and identified at the beginning of each school year, AIG Specialists work throughout the year to monitor students in underrepresented populations who show potential for giftedness and regularly seek teacher referrals within these specific groups. Beginning in the 2022/23 school year, the District AIG Coordinator will also collect and monitor screening, referral, and identification demographics to ensure fair, equitable, and consistent processes occur for all student populations district wide. This rolling referral process, which happens at least at the end of the second and third nine-week periods, minimizes the possibility of overlooking gifted students by providing underrepresented populations additional time they may need to adjust and display characteristics of giftedness.

In considering referrals, Excel Teams pay particular attention to demographic factors such as (but not limited to) potential socioeconomic status, cultural or ethnic background, and physical or linguistic ability. As described in Standard 1, Practice B, the AIG Specialist will also invite support personnel (e.g. Exceptional Children's or English Learner teachers, School Counselors, School Social Workers, etc) to serve on the Excel Team as needed. These professionals help promote equity by providing additional insights into students' potential to achieve, assisting in interpreting student data, and advocating for referral and identification of historically underrepresented students.

In order to ensure equitable screening, referral, and identification in high poverty schools, AIG Specialists will provide broader talent development services in settings where both of the following conditions are met:

- Less than 10% of the school's enrollment is identified as gifted, and

- 50% or more of the school population qualifies to receive free and reduced lunch.

In these schools, students who are not formally identified as gifted but nevertheless consistently outperform their peers may, when recommended by the school Excel Team, be offered talent development differentiation and enrichment opportunities with the AIG Specialist.

AIG Specialists also give particular attention to students identified for both gifted and Exceptional Children's services. These twice-exceptional students, along with those identified as Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AI, also known as highly gifted), may require more intense differentiated services (see Standard 2, Practice A; Standard 3, Practices B and Practice H; and Appendix C, Array of Services), which may warrant documentation on an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP). AIG Specialists will meet periodically with their schools' Exceptional Children's teachers to ensure twice-exceptional students receive appropriate modifications and services.

The District AIG Coordinator advocates for equity in gifted education through conversations with central office personnel, including members of the Curriculum and Instruction department. The District AIG Coordinator pursues opportunities to partner with colleagues whose roles are relevant to seeking equity, such as the Director of Exceptional Children's Programs, the coordinator for English Learner teachers, and/or the Director of Continuous School Improvement (e.g. Multi-Tiered System of Support). Working with this cross-section of teams will help to ensure identification of and responsiveness to under-represented gifted student populations.

*** Practice D**

Monitors the screening, referral, and identification processes for consistent implementation across the LEA.

Procedures for student screening, referral, and identification are detailed in the Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Plan, which is approved by the Watauga County Board of Education. The WCS AIG Plan is the source of unifying guidance in gifted education for all Watauga County schools, and its consistent implementation is assured through the regular collaboration of the District AIG Coordinator, AIG Specialists, and, in grades 9-12, the WHS/WIA administrator tasked with gifted education.

In WCS, Excel Teams are responsible for gifted identifications. At the K-8 schools, these teams are standing committees led by the AIG Specialists; at Watauga High School (WHS) and the Watauga Innovation Academy (WIA), they are formed as needed and led by the administrator responsible for gifted education and/or the WCS District AIG

Coordinator. To promote consistency, the District AIG Coordinator trains Excel Team members periodically (or, in the case of WHS/WIA Excel Teams, upon convening) on the following topics:

- the intent of the AIG Plan;
- the purpose of the Excel Team;
- identification procedures (as detailed in Standard 1, Practice A) and the AIG Identification Flowchart (see Appendix A);
- the Array of Services (see Standard 2, Practice A; Standard 3, Practice B; and Appendix C);
- confidentiality of student information; and
- advocacy for students and the AIG Program.

It is strongly encouraged that the District AIG Coordinator trains new Excel Team members prior to the first Excel Team meeting.

To promote consistent practices within each school from year to year, each AIG Specialist (or, at WHS/WIA, the District AIG Coordinator, administrator tasked with gifted education, and/or the School Counselor) provides their school's staff with an annual awareness session that includes:

- the legal mandate for and definition of giftedness (i.e. Article 9B);
- an overview of the WCS AIG Plan;
- the characteristics and needs of gifted students (see Appendix A), including those from traditionally underrepresented populations (see Standard 1, Practice C);
- a review of Best Search Practices (see Appendix A); and
- a review of the gifted screening, referral, and identification processes (see Standard 1, Practices A and B).

The District AIG Coordinator takes an active role with Excel Teams throughout the year to ensure consistent identification practices. The District AIG Coordinator will assist any AIG Specialist new to Watauga County Schools in

preparing for the first Excel Team meeting by helping collect student information, co-planning the agenda, attending the meeting itself, modeling correct student identification procedures, and helping complete any follow-up paperwork. The District AIG Coordinator may also be invited to any Excel Team meeting and may randomly attend Excel Team meetings to monitor consistency of practices. The AIG Specialist Team also periodically conducts collaborative case studies of individual student files to ensure consistent identification practices across schools, and the District AIG Coordinator annually conducts random audits of student files to ensure consistent identification and procedure practices.

Beginning in the 2022/23 school year, the District AIG Coordinator will collect and monitor screening, referral, and identification demographics to ensure fair, equitable, and consistent processes occur for all student populations district wide. This data will be provided to principals and other central office personnel in the monthly “Curriculum Updates” document.

*** Practice E**

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

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program provides stakeholders with information on its processes and services through multiple means.

As referenced in Standard 4, Practice B, AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, the District AIG Coordinator, administrator tasked with gifted education, and/or School Counselor) provide faculties with annual orientation on the WCS AIG Program, including an overview of screening, referral, and identification practices. The District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists, in collaboration with support roles such as School Counselors or School Psychologists, may also provide professional learning throughout the school year on various aspects of the WCS AIG Program. The AIG Specialists and high school personnel supporting gifted education may also share information through participation in grade-level or subject-area Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings. The District AIG Coordinator provides district leadership with information about the gifted program through written or verbal updates/presentations at monthly Curriculum and Instruction meetings. Additional follow-up conversations might occur with the Chief Academic Officer, the Director of Exceptional Children’s Programs, the coordinator for English Learner teachers, and/or the Director of Continuous School Improvement (e.g. Multi-Tiered System of Support).

AIG Specialists and School Counselors play a crucial role in communicating about the WCS AIG Program with parents/guardians and students. These personnel maintain websites and/or newsletters and participate in school orientations and open houses. In addition to these messaging methods, these professionals are the personal face of the WCS AIG Program. Classroom teachers, administrators, or other school personnel direct interested students, parents/guardians, and community members to the AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, the administrator responsible for gifted education) who can have informed conversations about the program's processes and opportunities.

The WCS AIG website, which houses the WCS AIG Plan, its ancillary documents, and other relevant gifted education information, is a primary means of communication with the general public. Here, stakeholders can find answers to frequently asked questions, see a list of AIG Specialists at each school, view relevant presentations and brochures, and provide feedback regarding the AIG program. The District AIG Coordinator also shares information with families and community members through the meetings of the AIG Advisory Council and public presentations to the Watauga County Board of Education. Lastly, anyone may contact the District AIG Coordinator directly with questions regarding the WCS AIG Program.

*** 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.

The AIG Specialist, in collaboration with classroom teachers, support staff, and other Watauga County Schools professionals, creates a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) and/or an Individual Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) for each AIG-identified student. This plan is based on student need and the array of services available. The AIG Specialist meets with the parent/guardian for an initial placement conference to review and sign the student's DEP/IDEP; subsequently, the AIG Specialist conferences annually with the parent/guardian to review, revise, and/or rewrite the student's current DEP/IDEP. The Parent/guardian receives a copy of the placement form (at the initial placement meeting) and a copy of the DEP/IDEP (at the annual review). AIG services should not begin without the parent/guardian signature on the current DEP/IDEP. The AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the School Counselor) is responsible for maintaining and securing all student records and updating them as needed.

At the end of each school year, each AIG Specialist conducts the Yearly Performance Review for all AIG-identified students with a DEP/IDEP. Review evidence may include (but is not limited to):

- Teacher and support staff feedback;

- Progress reports and/or report cards;
- Parent/guardian conferences;
- Summative assessment data (e.g. EOGs, EOCs, other end-of-year data, etc.);
- Student work samples.

If the student is progressing satisfactorily in his/her/their service option(s), the parents will be notified via the Yearly Performance Review form.

The entire educational experience for all students, including gifted learners, exists within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. (For more information on the role of the WCS AIG Program within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, see Appendix D.) This system allows all educators to consider available resources, examine available data, and proactively plan academic, attendance, behavioral, and social-emotional supports for students in need of intervention and enrichment. Like any student, gifted learners may show varying strengths and needs due to varying factors at varying points in their educational careers, and a high-functioning MTSS helps all educators work together to support AIG students in both their successes and struggles. The organization this framework provides can be useful in situations when gifted students' service delivery plans need adjustment.

For students currently on a DEP who are not progressing satisfactorily in their service option(s):

- The AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the School Counselor) writes an IDEP with input from all stakeholders (e.g. principal, classroom teacher(s), School Counselor, etc);
- The AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the School Counselor) conferences with parent/guardian for input on and approval of the IDEP.

For students currently on an IDEP who are not progressing satisfactorily in their service option(s), the AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the School Counselor) will revise the IDEP in collaboration with individual specialists (e.g. School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Social Workers) and/or school-wide assistance/intervention teams. At this point, the District AIG Coordinator should also be a part of the problem solving team.

School-wide assistance/intervention teams may, through their data analysis structures and processes, independently identify gifted students in need of academic, attendance, behavior, and/or social-emotional supports. In such cases,

these teams will communicate with the AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the School Counselor) to develop intervention plans, which may be reflected in DEP/IDEP documentation.

At no point will any gifted student's lack of satisfactory academic progress or need for intervention be used as grounds for eliminating gifted services. Giftedness is part of a student's identity that cannot be taken away, and gifted services are a key component of their educational experience necessary to ensure continued success and growth, not a privilege to be earned or revoked. Once students are identified as gifted in WCS, their services can and should be modified to ensure an appropriate match to their shifting strengths and needs, but these services will not be terminated.

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

1. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop targeted plans for enhancing equitable screening, referral, and identification practices among Hispanic and English Learner students.
2. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will participate in professional learning on giftedness in historically underrepresented populations and develop plans to train staff on this topic.
3. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop a process for including demographic audits as a component of all Excel Team meetings.
4. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will investigate the use of additional data collection sources for screening, referral, and identification, including standardized achievement assessments and an updated gifted rating scale.
5. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists, in collaboration with the AIG Advisory Council, will develop an updated AIG Parent/Guardian Handbook and/or Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document for families.
6. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop a plan to partner with the Exceptional Children's department to communicate with various stakeholder groups about district policies, practices, and resources in order to build awareness of and intent to reach and teach students who are twice-exceptional.

7. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator, WHS/WIA administrator tasked with AIG, and the WHS/WIA Student Services Department will develop a specific plan for gifted screening, referral, and identification in grades 9-12.
8. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop a rigorous, well-defined, research-based process for using student work portfolios in gifted referral and identification.
9. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop an AIG Communication Plan document including regular open interest meetings, meetings with culturally/ethnically diverse community groups, a quarterly WCS AIG Newsletter, and participation in transitional orientations (e.g. Kindergarten, 9th Grade).

Planned Sources of Evidence

- * 1. Clear, detailed plan for equitable screening, referral, and identification practices responsive to Hispanic and English Learner students
- * 2. Giftedness in historically underrepresented populations professional learning roster(s), collaborative notes, and other materials
- * 3. Clear procedure and documentation for Excel Team demographic audits (e.g. shared Google Sheet)
- * 4. Documentation of meetings discussing additional data collection sources or, if possible, the additional sources themselves; new or updated gifted rating scale
- * 5. Updated AIG Handbook or FAQ document for parents/guardians on the district website
- * 6. Documentation of meeting discussing collaboration with EC department; combined EC/AIG event
- * 7. Clear, detailed documentation of screening, referral, and identification process in grades 9-12
- * 8. Clear, detailed documentation of a research-based process for assembling and evaluating student work portfolios
- * 9. Clear, detailed WCS AIG Program Communication Plan

Documents

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 1 Additional Resources	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix A: Identification Flowchart and Criteria</u>  <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix B: WCS AIG Demographics</u>

Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

The LEA provides a K-12 AIG program with an array of services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners. These services will develop students' strengths through intentional learning experiences in various domains that are not dependent on the students' demographic background or economic means.

*** Practice A**

Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the academic and intellectual needs of gifted learners, across all grade levels and learning environments through collaboration with a variety of personnel. Services are aligned to students' advanced learning needs and AIG identification.

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program designs effective gifted education experiences through an intentional combination of various services and settings varying in kind, degree, and duration to meet each student's unique academic, intellectual, and social-emotional strengths and needs. WCS also recognizes the role of gifted education within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and uses this framework to inform the services gifted students receive and the settings in which those services are provided. (For more information on the role of the WCS AIG Program within a multi-tiered system of supports, see Appendix D.) The array of services described in this section (and summarized in Appendix C) ranges from developing gifted potential (described in detail in Standard 3, Practice G) to addressing the needs of students who demonstrate advanced skills and abilities.

Once the Excel Team identifies a nominated student, the AIG Specialist consults with the student, parents, classroom teacher(s), and any other relevant stakeholders (e.g. educational support specialists such as Exceptional Children's or English Learner teachers, School Counselors, School Social Workers, etc) to develop a service delivery plan matched to the student's identification area (academically gifted in Math, Reading, or both subjects; intellectually gifted; or academically and intellectually gifted; see Standard 1, Practice B for more information on these identification areas). In the K-8 schools, all relevant stakeholders receive a copy of the DEP/IDEP annually.

Service delivery plans are developed based on available data, the identification criteria (see Standard 1, Practice B, also summarized in Appendix A), and the array of services (described in this section and summarized in Appendix C). All differentiated services are documented in a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or, if appropriate, an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP). To ensure identified AIG students are matched to appropriate services, AIG Specialists annually review DEPs and IDEPs. (See Standard 3, Practice I for more information about documentation and review of student services.) Again, AIG services should not begin without the parent/guardian signature on the current DEP/IDEP.

Service delivery settings can vary depending on student needs, human capacity, scheduling considerations, and other school-specific factors; options may include delivery within the general education classroom (also known as inclusion services), within an AIG Specialist's classroom (also known as "pull out" services), during scheduled periods designated specifically for intervention and/or enrichment as part of an MTSS (e.g. "I/E Time," "FLEX Time," etc) or in a variety of other settings as described below.

Specific services and settings available at each grade span may include the following options described below.

In Kindergarten through Grade 2:

- Out of considerations for young students' academic, intellectual, and social-emotional development, it is the general practice of the WCS AIG Program not to identify students as gifted prior to third grade. Instead, all students in grades K-2 receive talent development services from an AIG Specialist through their general education classroom. These services foster the development of gifted characteristics and allow AIG Specialists an early opportunity to observe potentially gifted students; however, working with the AIG Specialist in grades K-2 does not in and of itself constitute gifted identification. (See Standard 3, Practice G for more information on talent development in grades K-2.) In rare cases of compelling evidence, students may be formally identified prior to third grade; see Standard 1, Practice B for more information on identification practices.
- Identified students in grades K-2 may be served in settings including (but not limited to)
 - Flexible groups;
 - Heterogeneous groups;
 - Accelerated subject or grade.

■ Services for identified students in grades K-2 may include (but are not limited to)

- Classroom interest centers;
- Community resource programs;
- Cultural arts presentations and programs;
- Guest speakers;
- Interest-based clubs, contests, and/or competitions (e.g. art and writing contests, Math/Science fairs, etc. -- see Standard 2, Practice I and Standard 3, Practice D for more information on these types of opportunities);
- Summer programs and/or camps (e.g. through WCS, universities, community organizations, etc).

In grades 3 through 5:

- In addition to service delivery settings used in grades K-2, students in grades 3-5 may also be served in settings including (but not limited to)
 - Online coursework (e.g. through the North Carolina Virtual Public School).
- In addition to service delivery options used in grades K-2, services for students in grades 3-5 may include (but are not limited to)

- Academic clubs and competitions (e.g. Elementary Battle of the Books, Elevating Mathematics, Geography Bee, Junior Beta Club, Math/Science Fairs, Robotics, Stock Market Game, Student Council, etc.);
- Mentoring.

In grades 6 through 8:

- Students may be served in settings including (but not limited to) those used in grades K-5.

■ In addition to K-5 service delivery options, services for students in grades 6-8 may include (but are not limited to)

- Academic clubs and competitions (e.g. Future City, MathCounts, Middle School Battle of the Books, Mock Trial, Model UN);
- Advanced courses (e.g. Pre-Math I, Math I, etc);
- Exploratory courses (e.g. School Newspaper, School Yearbook).

In grades 9 through 12:

- In addition to service delivery settings used in grades K-8, students may also be served in settings including (but not limited to)
- Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), dual-enrollment, and Watauga Innovation Academy (WIA) courses;
 - Early graduation and/or admission to college;
 - Governor's School;
 - Residential schools (e.g. NC School of the Arts, NC School of Science and Math; these options are offered outside of WCS at the family's expense).

■ In addition to K-8 service delivery options, services for students in grades 9-12 may include (but are not limited to)

- Academic clubs and competitions (e.g. Key Club, Career/Technical Education competitions, High School Battle of the Books);
- Apprenticeships, internships, and/or job shadowing;
- Community service projects;
- Elective courses;

- Independent studies;
- Mentorships.

These service delivery options are also supported by interest-based activities as described in Standard 2, Practice I; AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, School Counselors) collaborate with the range of educators in their schools to recognize students' interests and connect them to these opportunities. In addition to these service delivery settings and options, Standard 3, Practice B describes the variety of differentiation strategies used for all identified gifted students. It is the goal of the WCS AIG Program to provide students with experiences that encourage the development of critical thinking, collaboration, creative thinking, communication, leadership, problem solving, and other future ready skills.

Although there are AIG Specialists in our K-8 schools, the majority of students' instructional time is spent with their general education teacher(s). So, AIG Specialists provide direct and indirect support for general education teachers and other school personnel to meet the needs of gifted learners. These efforts may include:

- Coaching;
- Consulting;
- Resource development and support;
- Content acceleration;
- Professional development.

Giftedness is part of a student's identity that cannot be taken away, and gifted services are a key component of their educational experience necessary to ensure continued success and growth, not a privilege to be earned or revoked as stated in Standard 1, Practice F. The WCS AIG Program does not "de-gift" students due to unsatisfactory performance on their DEP/IDEP. Rather, this situation describes a need for adjusting services that more appropriately meet the needs of the student. The AIG Specialist will work with all stakeholders, including the District AIG Coordinator, to create a new DEP/IDEP for the student.



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*** Practice B**

Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the social and emotional needs of gifted learners, across all grade levels and learning environments through collaboration with a variety of personnel based on student needs.

AIG Specialists facilitate collaboration among a variety of groups in order to develop the most complete and nuanced picture of each AIG student and best serve their social and emotional needs. In their annual presentations to school faculty and staff, AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, the administrator responsible for gifted education, School Counselors, and/or the District AIG Coordinator) build awareness by highlighting the unique social and emotional needs of AIG students. AIG Specialists also provide specific training on social-emotional needs as necessary throughout the school year and conduct formal and informal check-ins with classroom teachers (e.g. during grade level or area meetings, in one-on-one conversations) to ensure these needs are being met.

AIG Specialists also collaborate with school counselors, school social workers, and other members of the Student Services Department to provide additional supports in meeting AIG students' social and emotional needs. School counselors provide individual and small group counseling sessions for students who have been referred by classroom teachers, AIG Specialists, and/or the school's assistance team. School Counselors also meet with each rising ninth grader to offer course suggestions, facilitate the high school registration process, and generally assist with this crucial transition. (See Standard 2, Practice F for more information about support for AIG students at key transition points.) As needed and appropriate, AIG Specialists also attend professional development opportunities with School Counselors and classroom teachers in order to build common understanding and language surrounding the social and emotional needs of gifted students.

Meetings to develop formal student plans are another opportunity for collaboration around social-emotional needs. In their annual review of Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) and Individualized Differentiated Education Plans (IDEPs), AIG Specialists consider not only academics, but also social and emotional needs, and relevant support staff (e.g. EC and/or ESL teachers, school counselors, psychologists, and/or social workers) are included as needed to assist in these considerations. AIG Specialists also meet with parents/guardians annually to discuss the learning environment, differentiated instruction delivery, and success in meeting social and emotional needs, and, if necessary, revise DEPs/IDEPs. AIG Specialists also take part as appropriate in 504 and/or Individualized Education Plan meetings for twice-exceptional AIG students in order to help assemble the most detailed picture of these students' needs. The DEP/IDEP, including any specific social and emotional goals, is shared with parents/guardians, teachers, and relevant support staff.

The social-emotional needs of all students, including the gifted, are also supported through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) operating within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. In regular PLC meetings, grade level and/or subject area teams discuss not only students' academic performance, but also observations and quantitative data related to their social-emotional needs, allowing for a whole-child approach that considers and addresses the interplay between academics and behavior. In cases of more intense student needs, PLCs elevate these discussions to school-level MTSS Teams for further problem-solving and intervention planning. AIG Specialists and School Counselors are involved at all levels of these conversations. (For more information on the role of the WCS AIG Program within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, see Appendix D.)

At the district level, the WCS AIG Program also collaborates with other groups to best meet gifted students' needs. Through periodic meetings with the Central Services Team, Curriculum and Instruction Team, District Leadership Team, and District MTSS Team, the District AIG Coordinator is able to share information and collaborate with school principals and district-level administrators regarding social-emotional needs of the gifted. The District AIG Coordinator also works with the AIG Advisory Council, which serves as a venue for sharing with stakeholders information about the social and emotional needs of gifted learners and obtaining feedback for how to improve in this area.

*** Practice C**

Integrates and connects the AIG program and services with the district's priorities and resources through policy and practice.

Watauga County Schools (WCS) is committed to providing an array of services designed to meet the unique and varying needs of gifted students while educating these students, like all students in WCS, for productive citizenship and lifelong learning. The WCS AIG Program is not an isolated initiative within the school system; rather, various frameworks and collaborative structures at all levels allow gifted education to be integrated with and connected to the total instructional program in WCS.

At the district level, the District AIG Coordinator periodically communicates with several teams central to the instructional and strategic planning for the district:

- District Leadership Team, comprised of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, all director-level positions in the WCS central office, and all school principals;

- District Media and Technology Advisory Committee, comprised of teacher, parent, administrator, School Library Media Coordinator, and Digital Learning Coach representatives from each school, as well as the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Director of Middle Grades Education, and Board of Education representative;
- District Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team, comprised of the Chief Academic Officer, Director of Continuous School Improvement, Director of Accountability and Federal Programs, Director of Exceptional Children's Programs, Director of Middle Grades Education, Director of Student Services, and Exceptional Children's Program Specialist;
- District Curriculum and Instruction Team, comprised of the District MTSS Team members plus the Director of Instructional Support Services and the Director of Technology.

The District AIG Coordinator also periodically attends Board of Education meetings and is involved in policy revision. The Director of Accountability and Federal Programs, in the role of liaison with the North Carolina School Boards Association, manages the overall policy revision process and notifies all central office directors when policies under their purview are up for review. When policy revisions arise that impact the AIG Program specifically or curriculum and instruction more broadly, the District AIG Coordinator has an active role in providing input on and rewriting these policies.

At the district level, AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, School Counselors) may also serve on various teams integral to the instructional program, including (but not limited to):

- Calendar Committee
- Elementary Curriculum Committee;
- Media and Technology Advisory Committee;
- Personnel Advisory Committee.

At the school level, AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, School Counselors) also serve on various teams integral to the instructional program, including (but not limited to):

- Compassionate Schools implementation teams;

- Grade-level, subject area, or other Professional Learning Communities (PLCs);
- School Improvement Teams (SITs);
- School MTSS Teams.

Through membership on these teams, the District AIG Coordinator, Specialists, and High School Counselors are empowered to continually share information about and advocate for the WCS AIG Program with other stakeholders, who in turn provide context for and input on AIG programming through their perspectives and work. These reciprocal conversations and resulting plans drive the allocation of available resources and the practical implementation of the WCS AIG Plan and WCS Board of Education policies pertaining to gifted students.

*** Practice D**

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

Watauga County Schools recognizes the importance of flexible grouping as a best practice not only for AIG students but all learners (as discussed by Robinson, Shore, and Enersen, 2007, p. 123-127). AIG Specialists collaborate with classroom teachers to employ a variety of research-based grouping methods both within AIG services and in general classrooms.

AIG Specialists and classroom teachers at all grade levels may group gifted students in a variety of configurations, such as an individual student working with the teacher, small groups of students working cooperatively, and/or whole class activities. In keeping with best practices for differentiated instruction (as described, for example, by Tomlinson and Allen, 2000, p. 3), AIG Specialists and classroom teachers create and plan for flexible groups based on students' readiness for new material, interests, and learning profiles, which may be comprised of data such as formative and summative assessment results, aptitude assessment results, student growth data, work samples, and teacher observations.

These flexible groupings may be homogeneous, grouping students with similar strengths or needs together, allowing teachers to specifically target these areas, or heterogeneous, with students of varied strengths and needs strategically grouped together in order to support and learn from one another as well as the teacher. These flexible grouping configurations can shift as needed throughout an instructional unit or even a single lesson, and the work of these

groups is differentiated in terms of how students access content, process it together, and create products to demonstrate their understanding (Tomlinson and Allen, 2000, p. 3). (More information on differentiation practices can be found in Standard 3, Practice A.) Overall, flexible groupings are consistently and intentionally designed to maximize student engagement and growth toward instructional goals.

Flexible grouping practices are also supported school-wide by the work of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Classroom teachers regularly meet in PLCs organized by grade level, grade span, subject area, or other like groups to discuss student data and plan accordingly for students' strengths and needs. These conversations and planning directly inform the configurations of flexible groups within the classroom, and these groupings are further supported by time in the master school schedule specifically devoted to intervention and enrichment (e.g. "I/E Time, "FLEX Time," etc). During these periods, flexible groups can meet with the AIG Specialist or other support staff to address their academic, intellectual, behavioral, and/or social-emotional strengths and needs to support achievement and growth in the general classroom. (For more information on the role of the WCS AIG Program within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, see Appendix D.)

AIG Specialists (and, in grades 9-12, other educators responsible for professional learning such as School Counselors and Instructional Technology Facilitators) also provide professional learning and/or other assistance to their faculties on grouping practices as needed throughout the school year. Following these trainings, AIG Specialists are prepared to model, co-plan, co-teach, and otherwise coach their colleagues in the data-driven creation and implementation of flexible groups.

At the district level, the District AIG Coordinator regularly analyzes available data for AIG students, including academic achievement (e.g. as indicated on end-of-grade and end-of-course tests, ACT test results, AP exam scores, etc), academic growth (i.e. as reflected in the Education Value-Added Assessment System), and behavioral and social-emotional data (e.g. number of absences and office discipline referrals). This analysis is shared and discussed at least annually with groups such as the District Leadership Team and Curriculum and Instruction Team to further inform course scheduling and grouping decisions.

*** Practice E**

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.

The Watauga County Schools AIG Program makes every effort to keep all teachers, school administrators, and support staff informed about gifted education law and policy as well as the local AIG Plan. All stakeholders can access the approved local AIG Plan, its appendices, resources, and contact information for the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists via the Watauga County Schools district website. On this website, all stakeholders can view Appendix A: Identification Flowchart and Criteria which is essentially a “District Plan 101” for those seeking to understand the WCS AIG Program at a glance. The website also contains a “Frequently Asked Questions” section and WCS AIG Program brochures in both English and Spanish. The District AIG Coordinator also provides an AIG handbook designed specifically for the AIG Specialists to ensure program goals, procedures, and expectations are clearly communicated and understood.

The District AIG Coordinator, AIG Specialists, and, in grades 9-12, School Counselors and administrator responsible for gifted education, collaborate to disseminate information about the AIG Program to Watauga County Schools employees in a variety of ways. These methods include (but are not limited to):

- Annual common, team-created training for teachers, school administrators, and support staff on AIG regulations and procedures (e.g. relevant state law; the use of multiple criteria to recognize AIG students; and the nomination, identification, and service delivery process);
- Annual common, team-created training from the District AIG Coordinator for new members on Excel Teams on state AIG law and standards, the local AIG Plan, and procedures for identifying AIG students;
- Review of identification procedures by the AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the administrator responsible for gifted education and/or the District AIG Coordinator) at each Excel Team meeting;
- Updates from AIG Specialists at grade level, subject area, and/or PLC meetings;
- Regular updates from the District AIG Coordinator at meetings of the AIG Specialist Team,
- Periodic updates from the District AIG Coordinator at meetings of the Central Services Team, Curriculum and Instruction Team, District Leadership Team and/or District MTSS Team;
- Updates from the District AIG Coordinator at Board of Education meetings upon the Board’s request.

The AIG Specialist shares all DEPs/IDEPs annually with classroom teachers and other relevant staff (i.e. Exceptional Children’s Teacher, English Learner Teacher, etc) serving these students and discusses the details of implementing

these plans. In grades 9-12, the District AIG Coordinator collaborates with the School Counselors and the administrator responsible for gifted education to ensure all classroom teachers are aware of their AIG rosters (e.g. by distributing AIG rosters at regular points throughout the school year and training teachers on how to locate AIG information in the student information system) and understand differentiation best practices for teaching AIG students (e.g. through professional learning sessions delivered by the District AIG Coordinator, School Counselors, Instructional Technology Facilitators, and/ or other support staff).

*** Practice F**

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

Open communication among all stakeholders is essential in ensuring the continuation of appropriate AIG services throughout a student's school experience. The District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists facilitate ongoing communication among teachers, schools, and other stakeholders concerning delivery options as AIG students transition between grade spans and/or schools.

The AIG Specialist collaborates with classroom teachers to develop and implement Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plans (IDEPs) for gifted students. AIG Specialists share these plans annually and meet formally and informally with classroom teachers to discuss AIG student needs, particularly at key transition points. The elementary to middle grades transition is simplified since these grades are housed within K-8 schools, placing teachers across these grade levels in regular contact. Because AIG Specialists interact with students and teachers in all grades K-8, they serve as a constant presence, facilitating information sharing and ensuring consistent service between these grades.

AIG Specialists maintain student records and transfer them between schools when identified students move between schools within Watauga County. If a student moves out of the school system, the AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the School Counselor) includes a copy of their AIG portfolio with other transfer information and retains the original student file. This file becomes an inactive file unless the student returns to Watauga County Schools. Inactive files are kept at each school for five years past the student's anticipated graduation date. Afterwards, these records are destroyed (see Standard 6, Practice J).

In the spring semester, the eighth grade school counselor at each school conducts individual meetings with eighth grade students and their parents/guardians. In these meetings, the school counselor goes over honors courses and

extracurricular opportunities. Students and parents/guardians have the opportunity to ask questions and create a rigorous academic plan for high school. The AIG Specialist is unable to attend all high school registration meetings. However, the AIG Specialist may consult with the eighth grade counselor, the student, and/or the parents/guardians in order to ensure class selections are most appropriate for the student's academic abilities.

At the end of the school year, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists compile a list of rising Watauga High School (WHS) and Watauga Innovation Academy (WIA) ninth graders indicating the areas and levels of services they have received at their K-8 schools. This information, along with AIG student files for rising ninth graders, is sent to the District AIG Coordinator before the last teacher workday. The District AIG Coordinator then takes the files to the WHS/WIA administrator responsible for gifted education, who then works with the WHS/WIA School Counselors to assist AIG students in selecting rigorous and challenging coursework that will continue to meet individual student needs.

Several supports are offered to AIG students entering WHS or the WIA. A transitional meeting for each K-8 school is held at WHS for rising ninth graders and their parents/guardians. Students and their parents/guardians are able to tour the facility, learn about high school expectations, ask class registration questions, and hear information about possible academic, social, and athletic opportunities. This high school orientation also includes a session specifically designed for AIG students and families, in which the District AIG Coordinator, WHS/WIA administrator responsible for gifted education, and school counselor(s) share how gifted students' academic, intellectual, and social-emotional needs are supported in grades 9-12.

*** Practice G**

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

A well-planned array of service delivery options (as described in Standard 2, Practice A and Appendix C) provides most gifted students with avenues for enrichment and extension. However, some gifted students may require more radical differentiation strategies and/or placements. The Watauga County Schools AIG Plan, in conjunction with the Watauga County Board of Education Policy Manual, defines how students are able to access accelerated instruction, if warranted. These options include early entrance to kindergarten, subject or grade acceleration, Credit by Demonstrated Mastery, dual enrollment, attendance at residential schools, early college or university admission, or other independent study.

Early Entrance to Kindergarten

Parents seeking early entrance to kindergarten for their student(s) can get information about this process from the District AIG Coordinator, Chief Academic Officer, and/or school principal. These children must meet the following criteria as explained in Watauga County Board of Education Policy 4100, Age Requirements for Initial Entry (as well as the cross-referenced components of North Carolina General Statutes 115C-364 and North Carolina State Board of Education policy Standards for Early Admission to Kindergarten, policy ID KNEC-001):

- The child reached the age of four on or before April 16;
- Student is presented for enrollment no later than the end of the first month of the school year;
- Student demonstrates an extraordinary level of academic ability and maturity as evidenced by the following documentation to be furnished by the parent/guardian “within the first 30 calendar days of the school’s instructional year” (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b):
 - A score of 98th percentile on an individual aptitude test given by a certified psychologist at parent/guardian expense;
 - An achievement level “two to three years beyond the child’s peers” (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b) as evidenced by a 98th percentile score on a standard test of achievement;
 - Student work samples documenting performance “well above age peers as evidenced by behaviors in one or more areas such as independent reading, problem solving skills, advanced vocabulary, and some writing fluency” (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b);
 - Letters of recommendation with specific documentation of physical and social maturity.

In determining eligibility for early entrance to Kindergarten, the principal shall convene the Excel Team to assist in making decisions about each case. In addition, the principal and the school AIG Specialist will conduct an informal interview with the child to determine his/her level of curiosity and interest in learning, as well as a more structured interview with the parents to explain school expectations. The principal will reach a decision regarding early kindergarten entry within three weeks after receiving the required information from the parent/guardian, and the principal may decide to implement a conditional enrollment period of up to 90 days “in order to observe whether the child is able to adjust to the school setting” (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999b).

Early entrance to kindergarten does not constitute AIG identification. However, AIG Specialists will review the files of students admitted to school according to these guidelines after the first ninety calendar days of the child being enrolled in school, if the principal deems it appropriate for the child to continue in kindergarten. If the records indicate gifted potential, then the school Excel Team will proceed with reviewing the nomination as described in Standard 1, Practice B.

Subject Acceleration

Subject acceleration options are available should AIG Specialists and Excel Teams deem this an appropriate service match for identified students. In determining whether subject acceleration is an appropriate student-service match, AIG Specialists will consult with classroom teachers and consider a student's level of interest and motivation; grades in the subject area; and previous achievement scores in the subject area, such as those on end-of-grade (EOG) or end-of-course tests (EOC), or other summative assessments.

AIG Specialists will also use available resources (e.g. released EOG/EOC items available through state-provided assessment systems) to determine a student's level of content mastery for any instruction that would be missed due to subject acceleration. Subject acceleration should not be provided for students who do not have a sufficient level of prior knowledge to enable success in the accelerated course; in these cases, curriculum compacting and/or enrichment may be more suitable service delivery options.

As with any student-service match, AIG Specialists, Excel Teams, and all professionals involved should also be attentive to the social-emotional well-being of AIG students when considering subject acceleration. However, all parties involved should bear in mind the large body of research consistently showing acceleration does not harm gifted students and is, in fact, one of the most beneficial service options we can provide when available data indicates the need (Cross, Andersen, & Mammadov, 2015, p. 31, 37-40; Robinson, 2004, p. 59, 61, 64-65; Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007, p. 223, 229-230), providing consistently positive academic, social, and psychological effects at all grade levels (Rogers, 2015, p. 28).

AIG-identified middle school students may be eligible to take Pre-Math I in the seventh grade and Math I in the eighth grade if it is deemed an appropriate placement by the AIG Specialist, Excel Team, school principal, and middle school instructors. Additional advanced coursework in math may be provided when necessary and appropriate. These math services are delivered at the elementary school by highly qualified teachers. The student's grades, EOG scores, interest, level of motivation, and score on the Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test are all considered.

NC General Statutes Chapter 115C, Article 8, Part 1 states that “when practicable, local boards of education shall offer advanced courses in mathematics in all grades three and higher. When advanced courses are offered in mathematics, any student scoring a level five on the end-of-grade or end-of-course test for the mathematics course in which the student was most recently enrolled shall be enrolled in the advanced course for the next mathematics course in which the student is enrolled.” Scoring a level five on a Math EOG or EOC does not in and of itself identify a student as gifted in Math; however, these students will be provided advanced coursework opportunities in Math. In grades 3-6, this advanced coursework will be provided through flexible grouping practices in the general classroom since separate advanced level Math courses are not offered in these grades; in grades 7 and above, qualifying students will take the next advanced Math course in the sequence. For example, a sixth grade student scoring a level five on the Grade 6 Math EOG would then take Pre-Math I in grade 7, a seventh grade student scoring a level five on the Grade 7 Math EOG would then take Math I in grade 8, and an eighth grade student scoring a level five on the Grade 8 Math EOG would then take Honors Math I in grade 9.

Credit by Demonstrated Mastery

Another pathway for whole-subject acceleration is Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM). This process, authorized and outlined under North Carolina State Board of Education policy CCRE-001, is a means “by which LEAs shall, based upon a body-of-evidence, award a student credit in a particular course without requiring the student to complete classroom instruction for a certain amount of seat time” (North Carolina State Board of Education, 1999a). Courses completed via CDM do not carry grades, GPA quality points, or honors-level credit (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2016); however, the CDM process can be a useful way for some students to satisfy graduation requirements without seat time, thereby creating space in their schedules for more advanced coursework.

The CDM process is open to all students in grades 9-12 as well as students in grades 6-8 taking high school courses; however, the following courses are not eligible for CDM:

- Career and Technical Education (CTE) work-based learning courses (co-op, internship, apprenticeship);
- CTE courses that have a clinical setting as a requirement of the course, such as ProStart, Early Childhood Education I/II and Nursing Fundamentals;
- CTE Advanced Studies courses;
- CTE courses in pilot and/or field test status;

- English Language Learner (ELL) courses;

- Healthful Living required courses;

- AP and IB courses; and

- Occupational Course of Study (OCS) Occupational Preparation I, II, III, and IV courses.

Students must undertake the CDM process during specified Fall, Spring, and Summer testing windows set by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Specific dates for these windows, along with information about the entire CDM process, are posted on the Watauga County Schools website. To earn credit via CDM, students must complete a two-phase process:

- Phase One: A course examination (i.e. an end-of-course test or locally-developed assessment). The student must meet a score threshold set by DPI to move on to Phase Two. These thresholds vary by eligible course and are posted on the district website.
- Phase Two: An artifact demonstrating the student's ability to apply knowledge and skills of the course. In the event a student progresses to Phase Two, a school or district CDM Student Review Panel will be convened to review and evaluate the artifact. As stated in the DPI Implementation Guide for Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2016), the CDM Student Review Panel shall consist of at least two content-area experts, the school principal (or designee), and an AIG or Curriculum and Instruction Specialist. This team will issue a decision regarding whether credit will be awarded; families may appeal this decision, and information on the appeals process is shared prior to beginning the Phase Two process.

Grade Acceleration

Grade acceleration is available should AIG Specialists and Excel Teams deem this an appropriate service match for identified students. Parents/guardians who feel grade acceleration may be appropriate for their child should discuss this option with their child's AIG Specialist, current classroom teachers, and school principal.

In determining whether grade acceleration is an appropriate student-service match, AIG Specialists will consult with classroom teachers and consider a student's level of interest and motivation; grades in all subject areas; and previous achievement scores, such as those on end-of-grade (EOG) or end-of-course tests (EOC), or other summative assessments.

AIG Specialists will also use available resources (e.g. released EOG/EOC items available through state-provided assessment systems) to determine a student's level of content mastery for any instruction that would be missed due to grade acceleration. Grade acceleration should not be provided for students who do not have a sufficient level of prior knowledge to enable success in the accelerated grade; in these cases, curriculum compacting and/or enrichment may be more suitable service delivery options.

As with any student-service match, AIG Specialists, Excel Teams, and all professionals involved should also be attentive to the social-emotional well-being of AIG students when considering grade acceleration. However, all parties involved should bear in mind the large body of research consistently showing acceleration does not harm gifted students and is, in fact, one of the most beneficial service options we can provide when available data indicates the need (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007; Robinson, 2004).

If, after reviewing the information described above, the AIG Specialist and Excel Team feel a student would benefit from grade acceleration, the Excel Team makes this recommendation to the school principal, who conducts a conference with the teacher, principal, school counselor, school psychologist, and the student's parent/guardian. The superintendent or designee shall review the recommendation before a double promotion occurs. The school principal has the ultimate responsibility for placement and grading of students in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations.

Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment allows middle and high school students to be enrolled in two levels of schooling at the same time. Students may remain at an appropriate level for the majority of their study and attend an advanced level for a specific course or period of time. This option may be appropriate for high school students who may be enrolled in post-secondary courses, or for middle school and high school students who may enroll in advanced courses via distance learning options (e.g. the North Carolina Virtual Public School). Students seeking these placement options must comply with North Carolina Statutes and meet the criteria as described in Watauga County Board of Education Policy 3101, Dual Enrollment.

Residential Schools

For some AIG students, full enrollment in institutions outside of Watauga County Schools may be appropriate. The North Carolina General Assembly funds two residential schools, the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) and the North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSSA), that address the unique needs of highly gifted students with significant interest in these subject areas. Some AIG students may choose to apply to colleges or universities that

offer early admission; if accepted, these students may transfer from high school into such programs. The early admission student who completes graduation requirements must adhere to the guidelines presented in Watauga County Board of Education Policy 3460, Graduation Requirements. AIG Specialists and school counselors work to identify potential applicants for NCSSM, UNCSCA, and early college/university admissions, and these students must meet selection criteria to attend.

Independent Study

Highly gifted students also have the opportunity to pursue independent studies on higher level tasks or areas of interest. Appropriate supervising personnel (e.g. AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, School Counselors) will direct these activities, which may result in mentorships, job shadowing opportunities, or any number of other individualized projects.

*** Practice H**

Develops mindsets, policies, and practices to promote equity and excellence by broadening access to advanced learning opportunities through a variety of intentional efforts, including talent development, at all grade levels.

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program provides service delivery options for traditionally underrepresented AIG populations. Each elementary school has a talent development component established for students in Kindergarten through second grade (as outlined in Standard 3, Practice G) that seeks to foster giftedness in all students, including those from underrepresented populations. AIG Specialists may also collaborate with classroom teachers in grades three and above to identify potentially gifted students from underrepresented groups, provide strategies for differentiating instruction to challenge these students, and provide talent development services directly with these students when possible.

As discussed in Standard 1, Practice C, the WCS AIG Program data show underrepresentation of: Hispanic students, English Learners, economically disadvantaged students, and potentially twice-exceptional students. The data show overrepresentation in two categories: whites and females. The AIG District Coordinator will seek further demographic analysis to examine intersectionalities of these groups. This will involve conversations with central office leadership, including the Director of the Exceptional Children's Program, the Director of Student Services, and the Director of Accountability and Federal Programs.

Every effort is made for the referral and identification of students who represent their school population. In their annual faculty presentations, AIG Specialists emphasize the importance of paying particular attention to gifted potential in traditionally underrepresented populations and discuss the perspectives on giftedness in these groups, including varied cultural attitudes toward giftedness and ways in which gifted traits manifest. Alternative assessments (e.g. nonverbal testing) may be used for identification purposes, especially when traditional assessments may not accurately capture the abilities or achievement of underrepresented populations. Specialists serving underrepresented populations (e.g. school counselors, school social workers, EC and ESL teachers) will serve as ad-hoc Excel Team members when gifted nominations for students in these populations are discussed. Beginning in the 2022/23 school year, the District AIG Coordinator will collect and monitor screening, referral, and identification demographics to ensure fair, equitable, and consistent processes occur for all student populations district wide.

Through the collaboration of various professionals, the WCS AIG Program provides comprehensive services for traditionally underrepresented populations. AIG Specialists partner with any school support personnel (e.g. school counselors, school social workers, Exceptional Children's and English Learner teachers) to develop and provide services specifically targeting the needs of traditionally underrepresented populations while also fostering their intellectual interests and academic growth. AIG Specialists and all educators responsible for working with gifted students are expected to be "warm demanders" (as outlined in "The Warm Demander Chart" cited in Sullivan, 2019, p. 24-25) who build authentic relationships with and set high expectations of all students, including and especially those from underrepresented groups, and then provide supports to help students rise to these expectations. These include explicit instruction on persistence and growth mindset as well as structures for students to understand and use academic vocabulary, be empowered to make choices about how they learn and show knowledge, and actively reflect with teachers on the learning process. AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, School Counselors and/or the administrator responsible for gifted education) must also ensure the materials used in gifted services are representative of and responsive to all populations, not just majority groups, and help raise this awareness with all classroom teachers. In turn, teachers and School Counselors continuously advocate for funding for culturally responsive materials for all students.

A key aspect of programming for underrepresented populations, especially culturally/ethnically diverse groups, is active, regular, consistent communication between AIG Specialists (or, in grades 9-12, School Counselors and/or the administrator responsible for gifted education) and parents/guardians of gifted or potentially gifted students in these populations. This communication, which may need to be facilitated by an interpreter, shows families the school system values their role as essential partners in learning, gives them specific strategies to support students at home, and helps them navigate institutional systems they may not be familiar with such as gifted programming or post-secondary

opportunities (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007, p. 251-252). These crucial conversations will help to educate all stakeholders by reframing their lens, informing and shifting mindsets, and shaping future policy.

The equitable representation and service of gifted students from underrepresented populations is also supported by regular, systematic data analysis. Standard 6, Practice E describes the process for monitoring the representation, performance, and retention of underrepresented populations in the WCS AIG Program. In addition to these techniques, the District AIG Coordinator, AIG Specialists, and, in grades 9-12, School Counselors and/or the administrator responsible for gifted education analyze demographic data for representation in various service delivery options (e.g. advanced coursework, subject/grade acceleration, admissions to residential schools, dual enrollment, etc) as well as the performance of demographic subgroups in these services (e.g. as indicated by summative assessment and growth data). This analysis can indicate areas in which underrepresentation continues to occur as well as areas where specific, intentional support is needed to ensure the success of underrepresented students.

*** Practice I**

Enhances and further develops the needs, talents, and interests of AIG students through extra-curricular programming.

Providing services for advanced learners is a collaborative school effort, is the responsibility of all school personnel, and extends beyond the traditional bounds of the classroom. In addition to academic pursuits, AIG Specialists and classroom teachers offer extra-curricular opportunities to further enrich and engage student interests. These opportunities may include mentoring programs, job shadowing, cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships, clubs, competitions, and camps. Examples of specific activities include (but are not limited to) Battle of the Books, Chess Club, geography and spelling bees, Elevating Mathematics, Jr. Beta Club, MathCounts, Mock Trial, Model UN, Robotics Club, science competitions, summer enrichment camps, and Yearbook. Specific offerings may vary between schools and school years based on availability. Additional support may be provided by Instructional Technology Facilitators, School Library Media Coordinators, cultural arts teachers, and community partners.

Providing extra-curricular programs and events is the responsibility of the total school community. The District AIG Coordinator collaborates with the Curriculum and Instruction Team, District Leadership Team, and AIG Advisory Council to maintain awareness of various extra-curricular opportunities, and AIG Specialists and School Counselors collaborate with parents/guardians and other community members to communicate and enhance the offerings available to their gifted students. Parents/guardians are encouraged to share ideas for and/or volunteer to co-facilitate extra-curricular activities at school.

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

1. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will analyze demographic data to identify specific underrepresented populations in WCS, including data from talent development, and develop specific plans for programming responsive to these groups.
2. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists, in collaboration with school and district administration, will develop guidance documents addressing if/when AIG students will be required to complete classwork missed when receiving AIG resource services.
3. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop and enact plans for professional learning related to culturally-responsive pedagogy.
4. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator will arrange professional learning on the social-emotional needs of gifted learners for all AIG Specialists, School Counselors, School Psychologists, and School Social Workers.
5. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop guidance documents on the processes for subject and grade acceleration decision making.
6. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator will create a task force to review/create policies and practices when serving twice-exceptional children and English Learners.

Planned Sources of Evidence

- * 1. Demographic analysis and planning document(s)
- * 2. Completed guidance documents on missed classwork for AIG students
- * 3. Culturally-responsive pedagogy professional learning roster(s), collaborative notes, and other materials
- * 4. Social-emotional needs of gifted learners professional learning roster(s), collaborative notes, and other materials
- * 5. Completed subject and grade acceleration guidance documents

* 6. Documentation of meetings with EC and EL departments; completed guidance documents on policies

Documents		
Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 2 Additional Resources	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix C: Array of Services</u>

Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

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

All educators in Watauga County Schools (WCS) are expected to plan instruction based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (SCOS) and differentiate instructional content, process, and products according to student readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Effective differentiation for gifted students is a collaborative process between all educators -- AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, and other support staff (e.g. English Learner teacher or Exceptional Children's teachers, etc).

At all grade levels, the role of classroom teachers in differentiating the curriculum for gifted learners is to provide opportunities within the regular classroom for gifted students to build on content they have already mastered by exploring it in new ways, applying it to new contexts, or moving ahead to new concepts. This can be accomplished using research-based strategies such as flexibly grouping students by similar interest and ability, delivering course content to students through higher-level readings and multimedia resources, and providing rigorous, open-ended, choice-driven options for students to demonstrate knowledge such as tiered assignments or project-based learning.

In grades K-8, AIG Specialists further support radical differentiation of the SCOS through the standards-aligned services they provide in addition to regular classroom instruction. By collaborating and communicating with classroom teachers through structures such as grade-level and subject-area Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), AIG Specialists know what standards are currently being taught in general classrooms; they then support and expand on

these standards by enriching and extending the curriculum through strategies such as interest-based experiences, thematic and interdisciplinary units, and long-range projects. AIG Specialists may also serve students by working with classroom teachers to compact grade level curriculum so students can begin accessing the next year's content early; still other students may have such extensive standards mastery that they benefit from subject or grade acceleration (as described in Standard 2, Practice G). To help embed standards-aligned differentiation practice throughout each student's experience, AIG Specialists may model or co-teach with classroom teachers. Furthermore, classroom teachers and/or AIG Specialists may flex schedules in order to accommodate whole day or longer experiences for interdisciplinary opportunities.

In grades 9-12, gifted students' course selections, made in close cooperation with School Counselors, are a first step in differentiating the SCOS. In a broad sense, Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses address students' varied interest in and readiness for learning higher-level content through more rigorous processes and products; however, course selection is not differentiation in and of itself. It is vitally important classroom teachers recognize even within a given Honors or AP course, there are still variations in student readiness, interests, and learning profiles, and so further differentiation is still necessary. The strategies mentioned earlier in this practice -- e.g. flexible groupings, rich course materials, opportunities for robust student products, etc -- are equally applicable in advanced courses. The established presence of 1:1 technology in grades 9-12 further supports a wide variety of options to differentiate content, process, and products for all high school students. In the absence of a high school AIG Specialist, it is the responsibility of the District AIG Coordinator to collaborate with high school administrator responsible for gifted education, the Counseling Department, the Instructional Technology Facilitators, and other support staff to train 9-12 classroom teachers in differentiation best practices for gifted learners and uphold consistent expectations for their regular use.

While students may be identified as gifted in English Language Arts (ELA) or Math, high quality differentiation strategies can be used regardless of subject area. Furthermore, AIG Specialists and classroom teachers alike should identify ways in which ELA and Math standards connect to one another (e.g. How do we explain mathematical reasoning using speech and writing? Where do we see mathematical concepts at work -- even metaphorically -- in literature?) as well as how these subject areas relate to others (e.g. How are abstract mathematical concepts practically applied in scientific study? How have global historical events impacted and been impacted by high-quality writing, and how does that cycle continue in current events?) Understanding and designing instruction around these interdisciplinary connections creates richer experiences for all students, increases the likelihood they retain knowledge thanks to repeated use across varied contexts, and provides for multi-layered differentiation as students apply strengths and interests in one subject to areas of potential growth in another.

*** 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.

AIG Specialists use each student's collected data (see Standard 1, Practice B) as the basis for an appropriate match to differentiated services. In differentiating instruction for gifted learners, AIG Specialists and classroom teachers consider students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles in order to tailor how to deliver content, how students process it, and the products through which they demonstrate learning (Tomlinson and Allen, 2000, p. 3). For gifted learners, these modifications should create opportunities to connect mastered content to new information and use it in increasingly realistic, complex, abstract situations.

At all grade levels, these differentiation best practices (also outlined in Appendix C) may include (but are not limited to):

- Alternative course delivery options
- Apprenticeships/internships
- Contracts
- Curriculum compacting
- Enrichment events
- Individual/small group investigations
- Learning centers
- Mentorships
- Paideia and/or Socratic seminar discussions
- Problem-, project-, and inquiry-based learning
- Technology-enhanced activities and resources

- Thematic and/or interdisciplinary units
- Tiered assignments
- Varied texts and other multimedia resources

Throughout the year, educators receive professional learning from AIG Specialists as well as other internal support staff (e.g. Instructional Technology Facilitators, English Learner and Exceptional Children’s teachers) and, when obtainable, external providers on a variety of topics related to differentiation (e.g. differentiation techniques, brain-friendly strategies, student data analysis to inform instruction). Differentiated instruction is also fundamental to an effective Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), so school- and district-level MTSS Teams also assist in providing professional learning and follow-up coaching support on differentiation techniques. AIG Specialists and other support staff also assist classroom teachers in differentiation by modeling and/or co-teaching using these strategies. Through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers collaboratively discuss the implementation of differentiation strategies, refine their use, and consider the data that informs their planning.

*** Practice C**

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

As part of its regular cycle for obtaining core instructional materials, Watauga County Schools (WCS) examines how these resources can be used to support gifted learners in the regular classroom. Additionally, the District AIG Coordinator and Specialists augment and differentiate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study through supplementary resources (e.g. DPI Advanced Learning Labs, Junior Great Books, Partners for Mathematics Learning, units from the William and Mary Center for Gifted Education). The District AIG Coordinator and Specialists meet monthly to share best practices and materials (e.g. as found at state and national conferences or highlighted in gifted publications), as well as to provide and/or receive professional learning on their use. Resources are selected based on student interests and needs, supporting research, and the quality of the material itself. AIG Specialists are also mindful of district curriculum pacing guides. This helps to align extension and enrichment resources with current student learning.

These resources enhance student learning through their use within the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (SCOS) and strong differentiated instruction. AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, and other educators employ these

resources to provide students varied means to receive content, process it, and create unique products of their learning (as described in detail in Standard 3, Practices A and B).

*** Practice D**

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

In creating educational plans for AIG students, AIG Specialists seek opportunities to empower these students as curiosity-driven, critical thinkers, communicators, collaborators, creators, and leaders. AIG Specialists collaborate with classroom teachers and other support staff (e.g. Instructional Technology Facilitators [ITFs] and School Library Media Coordinators [SLMCs]) to design rigorous, relevant experiences fostering these future-ready skills within core instruction and AIG service delivery. Examples of such experiences include active learning experiences in flexible groups, apprenticeships and mentorships, interdisciplinary and thematic units, leadership opportunities, problem- and project-based learning, research-based writing, service learning, and more. Additionally, academic clubs and competitions (e.g. Battle of the Books, MathCounts, Mock Trial, Model UN, robotics competitions, and others outlined in Standard 2, Practices A and I) address all future-ready skills as they provide students authentic, purpose-driven opportunities to work in teams to solve complex tasks.

While future-ready skills are not inherently linked to technology, Watauga County Schools' modern technology landscape further supports educators in designing rich instruction fostering these skills. The availability of classroom-based and 1:1 devices, a consistent learning management system, Google Apps for Education, and other digital curriculum resources allows teachers to incorporate engaging, diverse multimedia content into lessons, differentiate or even personalize learning, and provide students with an authentic, global audience for the products of their learning. ITFs, SLMCs, and other support staff also lend their expertise through co-planning, modeling, and co-teaching to bring a wealth of current, thought-provoking content into classrooms.

Students at WHS are exposed to future-ready skills through honors, AP, and other advanced courses. In these courses, students are expected to think critically, communicate effectively, collaborate meaningfully, and build creatively.

The development of future-ready skills through modern content and instruction supports Watauga County Schools' mission to educate all students, including the academically and/or intellectually gifted, for healthy, productive citizenship and lifelong learning.

*** Practice E**

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

To gather student data and inform instruction, Watauga County Schools (WCS) uses a robust system of ongoing assessments. This system includes formative (e.g. exit tickets, checklists, pre-tests, student work products, teacher observations, etc), interim (e.g. benchmark and diagnostic assessments, Common Formative Assessments (CFAs), NC Check-Ins, etc) and summative assessments (e.g. teacher-created unit tests, locally-developed final exams, Advanced Placement exams, North Carolina End-of-Grade and End-of Course tests, etc). The results of these assessments determine a student's academic need, drive curricular decisions, and support flexible grouping decisions.

Digital systems play a critical role in helping educators collect and analyze assessment data. The Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) gathers information on students' testing history and annual academic growth, allowing educators at all levels to assess whether AIG students are being academically challenged. In addition, the WCS Early Warning System (EWS) and the Every Child Accountability and Tracking System (ECATS) collect assessment data into learner profiles that not only facilitate analyzing progress toward academic goals, but also synthesize this information with data related to attendance, behavior, and social-emotional needs in order to consider each student holistically within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). In addition to these systems, WCS also uses Educators Handbook to track behavior data, which may inform flexible grouping practices.

The district trains teachers not only in how to assess students, but how to analyze and act on assessment data to enable all students to reach their potential. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a fundamental component within an MTSS for groups of grade-level and/or subject-area teachers, along with AIG Specialists, to regularly use structured protocols to facilitate unbiased, effective data analysis conversations. Through these discussions, educators evaluate the overall effectiveness of instruction as well as the implications for differentiation, including the most beneficial flexible grouping arrangements based on student readiness, interest, and/or learner profiles. Through their involvement in PLC meetings, AIG Specialists can provide expert guidance on the differentiation best practices for advanced learners suggested by ongoing assessment data. (For more information on the role of the WCS AIG Program within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, see Appendix D.)

Based on formative, interim, and/or summative assessment data, AIG Specialists may implement service options such as flexible groupings (see Standard 2, Practice D), compacted curriculum, advanced coursework, or independent

studies (see Standard 2, Practice G). Standard 2, Practice A and Appendix C outline the Array of Services AIG Specialists and classroom teachers may choose from based on assessment data.

*** Practice F**

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

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model provides a framework within which all educators work to support the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional success of all students. An effective MTSS includes structures such as grade-level or subject-area Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and school-level MTSS Teams to gather, monitor, and discuss data, including that which indicates student social-emotional needs (e.g. behavior screening data, discipline referrals, etc). These teams and data sources are supported by the expertise and observations of AIG Specialists working with gifted learners. This collaboration is further supported at the district level by the District AIG Coordinator's conversations with members of the district MTSS Team alongside the Director of Student Services, who is responsible for School Counselors and Social Workers, and the Director of the Exceptional Children's Program, who is responsible for School Psychologists. (For more information on the role of the WCS AIG Program within a multi-tiered system of supports, see Appendix D.)

Based on the available qualitative and quantitative data, AIG Specialists lead the way in responding to gifted students' social-emotional needs and guiding other educators in doing so. AIG Specialists lead conversations with and provide targeted direct instruction to groups of gifted students on their unique social-emotional needs, including establishing peer relationships, forming healthy self-concept, adopting and maintaining a growth mindset, and avoiding academic perfectionism or underachievement (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007, p. 17-21). Other support specialists such as School Counselors, Psychologists, and Social Workers are also uniquely positioned and trained to assist in this kind of conversation and teaching with small groups of gifted learners.

To empower all educators to assist in social-emotional support, AIG Specialists and School Counselors also provide professional learning as needed in the social and emotional needs of gifted students. This training can happen throughout the school year in a variety of contexts (e.g. PLC and faculty meetings, district-wide trainings, etc). See Standard 4, Practice C for more information on professional learning related to the WCS AIG Program.

Beginning Summer 2022, WCS will offer a Watauga Middle School Leadership Collaborative for rising sixth and rising ninth grade students. In this new program, students will have the opportunity to attend a summer camp focused on

academic skill enhancement as well as leadership development. The focus will be on successful transitions, STEM education, and leadership development.

*** Practice G**

Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students with early intervention and talent development opportunities through purposeful and intentional differentiated curriculum and instruction.

AIG Specialists provide talent development services to all K-2 students in order to foster their potential and begin identifying early indicators of giftedness. These services may include enrichment and extension activities on topics such as lateral thinking and creative problem solving skills (e.g. as outlined in the Primary Education Thinking Skills curriculum) as well as explicit instruction related to social-emotional issues such as setting realistic self-expectations for academic performance, maintaining a mindset of persistence (“grit”) and growth, and forming healthy self-concept and peer relationships. AIG Specialists create lessons that foster creativity, curiosity, and critical thinking while strengthening communication, collaboration, and leadership skills in young K-2 students. In delivering these services, AIG Specialists may work with whole classes and collaborate with classroom teachers to identify flexible groups.

In addition, AIG Specialists discuss observations of K-2 students with their teachers in order to identify highly gifted K-2 students who would benefit from formal identification and individualized services (as documented in an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan). The District AIG Coordinator reviews school rosters and AIG Specialists' schedules to ensure time is available for K-2 highly gifted and talent development services.

AIG Specialists meet on a monthly basis to receive updates and discuss curricular matters, including best practices and instructional strategies for the K-2 setting. Staff development may also be provided as appropriate to all K-2 teachers and AIG Specialists addressing the specific needs of and effective differentiation strategies for this population. The District AIG Coordinator and Specialists purchase (through school and district AIG funds) and use supplemental materials developed for nurturing giftedness in K-2 students and serving those already identified.

Note that talent development in grade 3 is less common in WCS because traditional identification and service delivery for gifted students begins in third grade.

*** Practice H**

Develops and implements differentiated curriculum and instruction that addresses the academic and intellectual needs of

gifted learners, across all grade levels, through collaboration with a variety of personnel based on student needs.

At each of Watauga County Schools' K-8 schools, AIG Specialists collaboratively plan differentiated curriculum and instruction with classroom teachers and other school support personnel (e.g. Instructional Technology Facilitators, English Learner and Exceptional Children's teachers, School Library Media Coordinators) on an ongoing basis. This collaboration may occur in person (e.g. via Professional Learning Community, grade level/subject area, or one-on-one meetings) or virtually (e.g. via the learning management system, Google Drive, Google Meet). AIG Specialists strive to utilize existing teaming structures rather than create additional meetings with teachers. AIG Specialists may further collaborate with classroom teachers by modeling appropriate gifted strategies and/or co-teaching lessons.

Besides their primary focus on collaboratively planning and delivering instruction, AIG Specialists may also collaborate with other educators in the following ways:

- Advocating for gifted students in team or grade level meetings. The AIG Specialist can guide teams through reflection questions (e.g. are gifted students able to accelerate when needed?) related to differentiation and gifted learners.
- Annually providing orientation about the Watauga County Schools AIG Plan to personnel at their assigned school. (See Standard 1, Practice E for more detailed information on the content of this orientation.)
- Actively participating in transition meetings at appropriate points in AIG students' academic careers (Pre-K to Kindergarten, second to third grade, and eighth grade to high school) to assist in adjustment to new learning environments. (See Standard 2, Practice F for more information on how AIG students are supported at key transition points.)
- Providing talent development services for all K-2 students (see Standard 3, Practice G) and underrepresented populations in grades 3-8 (see Standard 2, Practice H).
- Publicizing extracurricular enrichment opportunities (see Standard 2, Practice I) through emails, newsletters, school web pages, parent/guardian meetings, and informational flyers.

At the district level, the District AIG Coordinator supports and advocates for differentiated curriculum and instruction through conversations with district-level teams such as the Curriculum and Instruction Team, District Leadership Team, and District Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team. These conversations allow for two-way communication

with key stakeholders such as school principals, the Director of the Exceptional Children's Program, the Director of Student Services, the Chief Academic Officer, and the superintendent.

The District AIG Coordinator and/or AIG Specialists attend regional meetings, the state gifted conference, and other gifted information meetings provided by the Department of Public Instruction. The District AIG Coordinator meets monthly with AIG Specialists to provide updates on gifted education, review best practices and instructional strategies for gifted learners, and clarify any questions about the plan and/or service delivery options. The District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists also meet periodically with the AIG Advisory Council to review the program's implementation and offer suggestions.

*** 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/guardians to ensure effective programming, provide a continuum of services, and support school transitions.

The Watauga County Schools AIG Program uses a uniform Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) and Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) to document services for gifted students. These documents are created annually based on available data (described in detail in Standard 3, Practice E) and collaboration with the full range of education professionals to ensure appropriate student-service match and smooth transitions from grade to grade. The services documented in a DEP or IDEP are based on each student's academic, intellectual, and social-emotional strengths and needs as well as grade-level and subject-area curriculum standards and opportunities (as described in Standard 2, Practice A). AIG Specialists invite families to conference about and sign the DEP/IDEP at the beginning of each school year and are available at any time to meet with parents/guardians to discuss services.

AIG Specialists complete a Yearly Performance Review (as outlined in Standard 1, Practice F) for each student they serve to ensure the differentiated services provided continue to appropriately match each student's academic, intellectual, and social-emotional strengths and needs. The District AIG Coordinator completes a robust audit of AIG student records annually to ensure the DEP/IDEP process is being followed.

AIG documentation for students transitioning to Watauga High School (WHS) or Watauga Innovation Academy (WIA) is sent to and reviewed by the administrator responsible for gifted education, who then provides a list of AIG students to the appropriate School Counselors to ensure awareness of identified AIG students and their needs. The District AIG

Coordinator, the school administrator responsible for gifted education, and/or WHS/WIA Student Services Department also collaborate to ensure all high school teachers know their AIG student roster and best practices for differentiating for these students. It should be noted that all identified gifted students have an “AIG” icon next to their name in PowerSchool. For AIG students at Watauga High School, course selections become the DEP. Course selection is accomplished with input from the student, parents/guardians, and grade-level counselor. Students are encouraged to take the most rigorous coursework available to meet their individual needs. Counselors provide information to parents/guardians regarding the unique social, emotional, and behavioral needs of AIG students, and they provide counseling sessions to support AIG students in these areas.

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

1. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will collaboratively develop a consistent set of resources for K-2 talent development and plan for their use, including professional learning for K-2 classroom teachers on this topic.
2. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator, AIG Specialists, and WHS/WIA Student Services Department will collaboratively develop a consistent set of social-emotional learning resources and plan for their use with AIG students at all grade levels.
3. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator, WHS/WIA administrator responsible for gifted education, and the WHS/WIA Student Services Department will examine the feasibility of implementing a Differentiated Education Plan or similar document for AIG students in grades 9-12.
4. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will create an “AIG Program Progress Report” to be used in conjunction with regular report cards at each marking period.
5. By June 2025, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will collaboratively develop a repository of resources for AIG differentiation (e.g. model lessons and units), make these available to all WCS teachers, and provide professional learning on this topic.

Planned Sources of Evidence

- * 1. Clear, detailed plan for use of specific K-2 talent development resources
- * 2. Clear, detailed plan for use of specific AIG social-emotional learning resources
- * 3. Documentation of meetings discussing 9-12 AIG Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) and/or, if possible, a completed 9-12 DEP document
- * 4. Creation of an "AIG Program Progress Report" for AIG Specialist to use for identified K-8 students
- * 5. Completed repository of AIG differentiation resources accessible to any WCS educator

Documents

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 3 Additional Resources	N/A	 WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix D: AIG in an MTSS

Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the diverse needs of gifted learners that is ongoing 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.

The Watauga County Schools' (WCS) District AIG Coordinator holds an AIG licensure. To ensure the WCS AIG Program is guided by expertise and best practices in gifted education, the District AIG Coordinator collaborates closely with the WCS team of licensed AIG Specialists, licensed colleagues throughout the region and state, and state-level support staff in the NC Department of Public Instruction Division of Advanced Learning and Gifted Education.

The following duties of the District AIG Coordinator ensure the quality implementation of the WCS AIG Plan:

- Keep current with events and trends in gifted education, including matters of law, best instructional practices, new resources and materials, and other issues;
- Oversee the AIG budget, advocate for additional program funding as necessary, and use funds to foster the success and continuous improvement of the AIG program (e.g. by purchasing quality supplemental materials and providing for conference attendance);
- Coordinate AIG-related staff development opportunities;
- Review AIG Specialists' schedules and make recommendations if needed;

- Consult monthly with AIG Specialists to ensure that assigned duties and courses align with their gifted learners' needs;
- Collaborate with the Director of Accountability and Federal Programs to coordinate countywide assessments of students for identification;
- Periodically observe school Excel Team meetings and serve as an ad hoc member as needed;
- Enter gifted student information into PowerSchool from all schools; Maintain accurate student headcount; Work with the district Data Manager to review all information prior to submission;
- Make site visits to observe AIG Specialists and provide instructional feedback;
- Meet monthly with the AIG Specialists to provide updates and share best practices;
- Communicate, alongside the AIG Specialists, about the AIG program to all stakeholders;
- Facilitate the district AIG Advisory Council as described in Standard 5, Practice C;
- Communicate and collaborate with other District AIG Coordinators (e.g. by attending regional and state District AIG Coordinators' meetings and the North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented conference);
- Audit AIG student files each summer for properly completed documentation;
- Coordinate the evaluation of the AIG program;
- Lead the AIG Plan revision process and evaluate its effectiveness;
- Communicate about and advocate for the WCS AIG Program through periodic conversations with district-level teams including the Central Services Team, Curriculum and Instruction Team, District Leadership Team, and District Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team;
- Present regular updates on the effectiveness and goals of the WCS AIG Program to stakeholder groups such as the Watauga County Board of Education and district-level teams.

Additional information on the roles and responsibilities of the District AIG Coordinator can be found in Appendix E: Personnel Roles and Responsibilities.

*** Practice B**

Engages AIG-licensed specialists in tasks that explicitly address the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of K-12 gifted learners.

Each of Watauga County Schools' AIG Specialists is fully certified in Gifted Education by means of a master's degree, graduate certificate, or regional endorsement (Northwest Regional Educational Service Alliance [NWRESA]). This specialized training and overall pedagogical expertise promotes best gifted education practices throughout the district. In order to maintain a high-quality AIG program, Watauga County Schools expects AIG Specialists maintain teaching licensure and Gifted Education endorsement per requirements set forth by the NC Department of Public Instruction.

As of the 2021/22 school year, we have the following personnel assignments:

- Hardin Park School has two AIG Specialists;
- Blowing Rock School, Green Valley School, Parkway School, and Valle Crucis School, each have one AIG Specialist;
- Cove Creek School has two AIG Specialists (but, they also have other teaching assignments)
- Bethel School and Mabel School share one AIG Specialist;
- Watauga Virtual Academy has one AIG Specialist;
- Watauga High School / Watauga Innovation Academy does not have an AIG Specialist; rather, there is an administrator responsible for gifted services, working alongside the school counselors to coordinate service delivery.

These assignments are subject to change based on caseloads, scheduling, and other teaching responsibilities as assigned by each school's principal. In some cases, the AIG Specialist also teaches other classes (i.e. Math I, Pre-Math I, etc).

To effectively address AIG students' academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs, AIG Specialists in K-8 schools are tasked with the following duties:

- Annually provide AIG Plan orientation, including screening, identification, and placement procedures, for faculties, administrators, and parents/guardians;
- Serve as chairperson of the site-based Excel Team, maintaining accurate minutes including a record of students nominated and placed in the AIG program;
- Maintain a file for each identified gifted student that includes placement qualifications, updated testing information, academic records, and annually completed Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) or Individual Differentiated Education Plan (IDEPs) and Yearly Performance Reviews (YPRs);
- In a regular and timely fashion, update and reevaluate the qualifications of students whom the Excel Team placed on a "wait and watch" status;
- Provide gifted education professional development for classroom teachers and other educators;
- Participate in local, regional, state, and/or national professional learning related to gifted education;
- Collaborate with K-2 classroom teachers to provide talent development services;
- Collaborate with classroom teachers to plan and deliver differentiated instruction for gifted students;
- Provide and facilitate differentiated instruction through a variety of service delivery options for gifted students based on student and teacher needs (e.g. inclusion, resource, exploratory blocks, interest groups);
- Collaborate with support staff (e.g. English Language and Exceptional Children's teachers, School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Social Workers) to address the needs of students from special populations;
- Sponsor various competitions (e.g. Battle of the Books, Mock Trial, Model UN) and extra-curricular enrichment events (e.g. Space Camp, Chess Club, Robotics Club);
- Inform stakeholders of AIG events through a variety of media (e.g. emails, newsletters, parent/guardian events, and school websites);

- Communicate annually with parents/guardians regarding their child's academic progress through the DEP/IDEP and YPR;
 - Send required paperwork to and coordinate with the District AIG Coordinator to maintain an accurate AIG student headcount;
 - Attend monthly AIG Specialist Team meetings with the District AIG Coordinator to receive updates and share best practices.
- Additional information on the roles and responsibilities of AIG Specialists can be found in Appendix E: Personnel Roles and Responsibilities.

*** Practice C**

Establishes specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, instructional specialists, student services personnel, and school administrators.

Watauga County Schools (WCS) recognizes comprehensive, sustained professional development is central to successfully implementing its AIG Plan and thus providing each gifted student with the best possible educational experience. While specific professional development offerings vary in their topics, their overall goals are the same:

- Promote awareness of and positive attitudes toward gifted students' unique characteristics and needs;
- Develop teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction and ability to implement it for gifted students;
- Contribute to the overall quality of the total school community in support of gifted students.

As part of WCS' commitment to the AIG Program as part of the total school community, the District AIG Coordinator and Specialists offer professional development throughout each school year to all professionals involved in gifted education -- e.g. classroom teachers, instructional specialists, student service personnel, and school administrators. The focus and frequency of these offerings are determined through formal and informal needs assessments (e.g. WCS AIG Program stakeholder surveys, the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey, EOG/EOC data, student data analysis, and conversations with administrators, classroom teachers, and AIG Specialists). Because these varied professionals

support gifted learners in varied ways, professional learning offerings must be tailored to these roles as described below.

All educators receive professional learning on the following topics:

- The legal mandate for AIG services (i.e. as provided in Article 9B), the guidance provided by the North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards, and the implementation of these standards through the WCS AIG Plan;
- The process of nominating, identifying, and serving AIG students from all backgrounds, including underrepresented populations;
- The purpose of talent development, which is to promote equity and excellence by broadening access to advanced learning opportunities through a variety of intentional efforts (see Standard 2, Practice H).
- The role of gifted education within a Multi-Tiered System of supports (MTSS).

Classroom teachers may receive additional professional learning on the following topics:

- Best practices for differentiating instruction for gifted learners (see Standard 3, Practice B for more details);
- Strategies for collaborating with AIG Specialists, including co-teaching best practices;
- Use of specific instructional resources with gifted students;
- Recognizing and supporting the social-emotional needs of gifted learners (e.g. managing perfectionism, avoiding underachievement, developing healthy self-concept; see Standard 2, Practice B for more details) within the classroom setting.

Exceptional Children's teachers, English Learner teachers, and other educators who support specific populations may receive additional professional learning on the following topics:

- The potential for giftedness in all students, regardless of any specialized identifications or services they may receive;

- Their role in meeting the unique needs of gifted students within the populations they serve (e.g. twice-exceptional students, gifted English Learner students);

- Their role in advocating for gifted identification and service among the populations they serve;
- Strategies for collaborating with AIG Specialists, including co-teaching best practices;
- Use of specific instructional resources with gifted students.

School Counselors, School Psychologists, and School Social Workers may receive additional professional learning on the following topics:

- Recognizing the social-emotional needs of gifted learners;
- Supporting these social-emotional needs throughout the school and in the home, including through communication and collaboration with parents/guardians.

School administrators and district department directors may receive additional professional learning on the following topics:

- The necessity of gifted education to ensure the academic, intellectual, and social-emotional success of gifted students;
- The role of administrators and directors in the successful implementation of the WCS AIG Plan, including creating structures for AIG personnel and other educators to collaborate and advocating for gifted education within their schools and communities.

The Northwest Regional Educational Services Alliance (NWRESA) developed local coursework to support cohorts of interested elementary, middle, and high school educators in becoming better prepared to teach AIG students and obtain a regional AIG endorsement. As a NWRESA member district, WCS is committed to full participation in these free cohorts and will encourage classroom teachers to participate. These teachers can then support AIG Specialists in providing professional learning and advocacy in schools.

The District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists collaboratively develop plans for their own professional learning based on needs indicated by available data as well as state licensure renewal requirements. The District AIG

Coordinator encourages AIG Specialists to attend the annual conference of the North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented, as well as other relevant experiences such as the annual North Carolina Technology in Education Society (NCTies) conference or offerings from the North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching. When possible, the District AIG Coordinator supports attendance at such professional learning experiences through the use of district AIG funds.

*** 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.

Watauga County Schools (WCS) ensures the quality of personnel serving AIG students through three priorities:

- Maintain licensed AIG Specialists in every K-8 school;
- Hire teachers deemed highly qualified in their subject area by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI).
- Whenever possible, cluster AIG students with AIG-licensed classroom teachers K-12

While not all general education classroom teachers are formally licensed in gifted education, their highly qualified status signifies sound pedagogical understanding upon which the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists build knowledge of gifted education strategies through ongoing professional learning (see Standard 4, Practice C) in which all educators are expected to participate in some capacity. Collaborative planning between highly qualified classroom teachers and licensed AIG Specialists ensures quality service delivery for identified gifted students through inclusion, resource, and various grouping options.

Educator teams at all levels (e.g. grade-span and/or subject-area professional learning communities, School Multi-Tiered System of Supports and/or School Improvement Teams, the District Leadership Team) should monitor available data to determine the effectiveness of general education classroom teachers working with gifted students. Relevant data may be gathered from formative, interim, and summative assessments, as well as student growth data reported through the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). This data analysis should inform how AIG students are clustered and scheduled, as well as how teachers are supported through professional learning and collaboration with AIG Specialists.

*** Practice E**

Develops strategies for the recruitment and retention of AIG-licensed professionals, including those of diverse backgrounds.

When an AIG Specialist position becomes available, it gets posted on the WCS district website. The Human Resources department often advertises job vacancies on other websites and social media outlets in order to encourage a diverse application pool. Typically, jobs are posted for ten days before scheduling interviews. The District AIG Coordinator and the site-based school's administrator review all qualified applicants. An interview list is created based on candidate qualifications including teacher certifications and experience. The District AIG Coordinator, the Director of Human Resources (or designee), and the site-based administrator conduct interviews. At least one of the interview questions will ask candidates about meeting the needs of gifted and advanced learners.

Any teacher without AIG licensure hired for an AIG Specialist position is issued a provisional license and given two years to attain full licensure. The new hire has the opportunity to obtain AIG licensure by means of a master's degree, graduate certificate, or regional endorsement (Northwest Regional Educational Service Alliance [NWRESA]). The first two options are at the expense of the new hire. The regional endorsement option is at no-cost to the new hire. Additionally, the District AIG Coordinator will authorize district AIG funds to cover the cost of the Praxis Test for gifted education. Any teacher hired with existing AIG licensure is responsible for maintaining their license in accordance with DPI guidelines and the WCS AIG Plan.

Watauga County Schools strives to be the best place to learn and work in North Carolina. In an effort to help retain our AIG-licensed professionals, the District AIG Coordinator:

- Allocates budget for professional development opportunities, like state conferences (when possible)
- Allocates budget to reimburse the cost of the Praxis Test for gifted education for AIG Specialists Creates an agenda item for “celebrations” at each monthly AIG Specialists meeting
- Recognizes AIG Specialists at school board meetings, prior to the presentation of the local AIG plan
- Utilize WCS AIG Program stakeholder survey results in order to make improvements for AIG-licensed professional working conditions.

*** Practice F**

Provides focused professional learning opportunities to realize equity and excellence in gifted education including changing mindsets, policies, and practices.

Watauga County Schools' AIG Specialists annually explores documents like the "Call to Action: Critical Actions to Realize Equity and Excellent in Gifted Education" publication from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. This document specifically focuses on changing mindsets, policies, and practices to increase access and opportunities for all. The District AIG Coordinator, alongside the AIG Specialists, analyzes these actions and compares those to our local AIG plan. Conversations lead to data analysis, which then leads to actionable plans for real changes to the local AIG plan.

As discussed in Standard 1, Practice C, the WCS AIG Program data show underrepresentation of: Hispanic students, English Learners, economically disadvantaged students, and potentially twice-exceptional students. The data show overrepresentation in two categories: whites and females. The AIG District Coordinator will seek further demographic analysis to examine intersectionalities of these groups. This will involve conversations with central office leadership, including the Director of the Exceptional Children's Program, the Director of Student Services, and the Director of Accountability and Federal Programs.

Professional learning opportunities will be created based on professional conversations, relevant data, and available resources. The District AIG Coordinator will continuously reach out to the appropriate district directors (e.g. Exceptional Children's Direction, Director of Accountability and Federal Programs, etc) to help integrate existing action steps and efforts regarding equity and excellence.

*** Practice G**

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

In Watauga County Schools (WCS), training on gifted education is aligned with and embedded within district-wide professional development goals. The WCS Curriculum and Instruction Team prioritizes, plans, and delivers professional learning based on a variety of information, including:

- Student proficiency and growth data;

- Staff and student survey results (e.g. on the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey and locally-developed follow-up surveys);
- School, district, and state initiatives (e.g. the WCS Strategic Plan, the WCS AIG Plan, individual School Improvement Plans);
- Current pedagogical best practices and trends (e.g. as gathered from professional reading, attendance at regional meetings and state/national conferences, etc);
- Professional standards;
- The North Carolina teacher evaluation instrument (e.g NCEES);
- Other formal and informal needs assessments.

Based on this information (as well as any other relevant data), the Curriculum and Instruction Team establishes district-wide staff development goals and plans implementation. Professional learning offerings are delivered during days scheduled annually for this purpose, as well as throughout the school year in both in-person and virtual settings. The Curriculum and Instruction Team's regular meetings provide an avenue for discussion, assessment, and continuous improvement of professional development.

Through conversations with the Curriculum and Instruction Team, the District AIG Coordinator is able to directly impact the integration of gifted education into broader professional learning contexts. Where appropriate, the District AIG Coordinator also advocates for the involvement of AIG Specialists in district-level professional learning offerings (e.g. trainings on new curriculum resources). Each individual school may also plan additional professional learning offerings based on its specific instructional needs, and AIG Specialists are included in these sessions as well.

Currently, professional learning priorities in WCS include the related topics of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework for total school improvement, the role of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in this framework, and the necessity of high-quality differentiated instruction within these structures. These needs are fundamentally intertwined: high-quality differentiation informed by the collaborative work of PLCs creates effective core instruction, the bedrock of an MTSS framework. (For more information on the role of the WCS AIG Program within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, see Appendix D.) Training educators on these elements -- differentiation and PLCs in support of an MTSS -- directly aligns with WCS AIG Program goals in several ways:

- High-quality differentiation ensures every AIG student is appropriately challenged in the regular classroom;
- Effective PLCs provide consistent venues for gathering, discussing, and acting on student data, which supports collaboration with AIG Specialists to identify and serve AIG students and monitor the impact and equity of the AIG Program;
- A robust MTSS creates specific, consistent structures to monitor and respond to the unique academic, intellectual, and social-emotional needs of AIG students throughout the school.

The District AIG Coordinator relies on the AIG Specialists to give feedback “from the field” on professional developments needed throughout the district. In turn, the District AIG Coordinator channels this information to directors at the district level.

Watauga County Schools (WCS) recognizes collaboration among educators is essential to high-quality learning. As evidenced in the WCS Strategic Plan, the district is committed to creating structures to facilitate this collaboration. Through these structures, AIG Specialists work as a team and with educators in their schools to implement professional learning in support of the WCS AIG Program.

AIG Specialists collaboratively plan implementation of their professional learning through means such as:

- Meeting monthly with the District AIG Coordinator to clarify issues regarding service delivery options and receive updates concerning gifted education initiatives;
- Sharing ideas, resources, and best practices via instructional technology (e.g. Google Drive, the Canvas learning management system);
- Participating in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with regular education teachers and other professionals;
- Attending grade level and/or subject area meetings to stay abreast of current goals and units of study;
- Collaboratively planning lessons or units with regular education teachers;
- Meeting with other school personnel who provide and/or consult on services to gifted students;

- Participating in staff development offered by and to regular education teachers so they are knowledgeable about new strategies, programs, and initiatives and can be of support to classroom teachers.

AIG Specialists subsequently apply their professional learning through various means:

- Providing direct service to gifted students as outlined in the Array of Services (see Standard 2, Practice A and Appendix C);
- Modeling best gifted education practices for other teachers;
- Co-teaching with general classroom teachers;
- Assisting general classroom teachers in designing differentiated activities;
- Providing general classroom teachers with appropriate differentiation resources.

To support collaborative implementation and refinement of professional learning, the District AIG Coordinator works with school administrators to examine AIG Specialist responsibilities and scheduling. As available, additional funding will be requested to support the attendance of AIG Specialists at professional development opportunities and state meetings/conferences in the area of gifted education.

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

1. By June 2024, create an “AIG 101” professional learning opportunity that covers gifted characteristics, supporting gifted students socially and emotionally, and differentiation techniques for gifted students.
2. By June 2025, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will develop a specific AIG professional learning plan tailored to various professional roles that includes face-to-face offerings and self-paced digital modules based on the AIG Booster Shots series.
3. By June 2025, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists, in collaboration with the Curriculum and Instruction Team and school principals, will explore the development of local AIG professional learning requirements for classroom teachers.

Planned Sources of Evidence

- * 1. Documentation of an "AIG 101" course, potentially online, for general education teachers
- * 2. Clear, detailed AIG professional learning plan with specific materials and resources
- * 3. Documentation of meetings discussing local AIG professional learning requirements and/or, if possible, an outline of these requirements

Documents

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 4 Additional Resources	N/A	WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix E: Personnel Roles and Responsibilities

Standard 5: Partnerships

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

Standard 5: Partnerships

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

*** Practice A**

Develops intentional, two-way partnerships with parents/guardians to support the following needs of AIG students:

- academic and intellectual
- social and emotional.

The AIG Specialists in each school are the first line of contact for building and maintaining partnerships with parents/guardians of gifted students. AIG Specialists use methods such as the following to communicate and partner with parents/guardians:

- Meeting with parents/guardians annually to evaluate services as outlined in the DEP/IDEP and make any necessary changes to achieve the optimal student/service match;
- Collaborating with classroom teachers to share student progress information through teacher conferences, phone calls, emails, progress reports, report cards, newsletters, and/or student-led conferences;
- Presenting AIG information at Open House and PTO meetings; or, simply being available to parents/guardians at these school-wide events;
- Posting program updates and upcoming events on a school AIG website;

- Providing an AIG brochure to parents/guardians of AIG students;
- Periodically sharing with parents/guardians information about special events that would benefit AIG students (e.g. Scholars Weekend, summer camps, etc.; see Standard 2, Practice 1 for more information);
- Surveying parents/guardians for how they can be involved with and supportive of the AIG program.

Extracurricular events and other services for AIG students may incorporate community partnerships. Parent/guardian involvement is also essential to these types of activities, and AIG Specialists seek active partnerships with parents/guardians to this end. Such services may include:

- Apprenticeships/mentorships;
- Community outreach and service projects;
- Band, choral, music, and performing arts opportunities;
- Guest speakers and career fairs;
- Student presentations to authentic, public audiences;
- Various competitions (Battle of the Books, Elevating Mathematics, Mathcounts, Math Fair, Mock Trial, Science Fair, Spelling Bee, etc).

The District AIG Coordinator works to facilitate and strengthen community partnerships at the district level through activities such as:

- Showcasing AIG initiatives via print and digital media outlets (e.g. press releases, social media);
- Maintaining the district AIG website, where the AIG Plan and supplementary documents are stored;
- Encouraging schools to include the AIG program as part of their School Improvement Plans;
- Leading regular meetings of the AIG Advisory Council (described in detail in Standard 5, Practice C);
- Regularly and intentionally seeking feedback on the WCS AIG Program from parents/guardians;

- Arranging parent information sessions on social-emotional needs of gifted learners
- Generally advocating for gifted education with members of the Watauga County community.

*** Practice B**

Partners with community stakeholders, such as institutions of higher education, local business and industry partners, and others to enhance and support the local AIG program and services.

Watauga County Schools strives to develop sustained community partnerships that enhance and contribute to the array of available services. The District AIG Coordinator actively seeks to foster such partnerships, but the total school community -- Board of Education members, the Superintendent, principals, AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, and even students -- is involved in doing so. Key community partners include Appalachian State University (ASU), Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute (CCC&TI) and local businesses. Through the volunteers, space, and donations these organizations provide, they publicly recognize the importance of the WCS AIG Program and advocate for gifted education.

Community partnerships enhance the AIG Program by providing AIG students with a broader range of authentic, rigorous, engaging learning experiences. In some cases, these enriching opportunities extend beyond the school walls by providing mentoring, job shadowing, internships, distance learning, dual enrollment, and apprenticeship experiences. Partner programs include (but are not limited to):

- Apprenticeships, job shadowing, and mentoring
- ASU Public School Partnership
- Community Grants (Bright Ideas and Watauga Education Foundation)
- Career and Technical Education (Advanced Studies)
- Dual enrollment
- Early college admission
- Field trips (e.g. college visits)

- Governor's School
- Mountain Alliance
- NC School of the Arts, NC School of Math and Science
- Online and/or distance learning courses
- Summer Ventures in Math

*** Practice C**

Establishes and utilizes an advisory group to develop, implement, monitor, and revise 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/guardians, AIG teachers, and other instructional and support staff.

The AIG Advisory Council plays a vital role in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the AIG Program. Its purpose is to promote gifted education in Watauga County, support enrichment opportunities for students, and assist in the monitoring and revision of the WCS AIG Plan. The AIG Advisory Council is also a key avenue for fostering community partnerships (as outlined in Standard 5, Practice A).

The Council is led by the District AIG Coordinator, meets quarterly, and consists of the AIG Specialists, the Watauga High School / Watauga Innovation Academy administrator responsible for gifted education, and parent/guardian representatives from each school. In seeking parent/guardian representatives, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialist also aim to represent various community partnerships (e.g. through parents employed at Appalachian State University or other major local employers) and district demographics (e.g. parents of twice-exceptional students or from diverse cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds). Principals and Board of Education members also have standing invitations to attend any AIG Advisory Council meeting. Recommendations from the AIG Advisory Council are reviewed by the District AIG Coordinator and the Chief Academic Officer for referral to appropriate teams and further action.

To engage the AIG Advisory Council in monitoring of and feedback on the WCS AIG Plan, the District AIG Coordinator regularly shares updates about AIG programming and invites other relevant stakeholders to do so. The District AIG Coordinator also compiles annual AIG stakeholder survey results and shares them with the AIG Advisory Council, inviting them to process this data and discuss next steps it may suggest. The District AIG Coordinator also directly

involves the AIG Advisory Council in the AIG Plan revision process by asking members to read, comment on, and discuss each section of the current plan, including the places in which it is effective and its opportunities for improvement.

The Watauga County Schools AIG Program also seeks input from a range of stakeholders. Annually, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists deploy surveys aligned with the NC AIG standards to AIG students, their parents/guardians, their classroom teachers, and each school principal. AIG Specialists also complete a standards-aligned self-assessment annually. The District AIG Coordinator and Specialists review and analyze the response data to guide program planning and goal setting, with changes made as personnel and finances permit. Data from the surveys that are appropriate for public consumption are posted on the district AIG website. In an effort toward continuous program improvement for equity and excellence, this information is shared with the Watauga County Schools administration and AIG Advisory Council. The District AIG Coordinator and local administrators assist with monitoring the plan through teacher observation and conferences.

*** Practice D**

Informs all students, parents/guardians, and the community of the following:

- Local AIG Plan
- Local AIG program services
- Policies relating to advanced learning and gifted education
- Ways to access opportunities available to AIG students

Communication is ongoing and responds to the diverse language needs of the community.

The WCS AIG Program makes a concentrated effort to operate with transparency and inform all stakeholders, especially parents/guardians of gifted students, of the local AIG Program Plan. School and district AIG websites provide information about the AIG program, possible service delivery options, and contact information for each school. The local AIG Plan and supplementary documents (e.g. appendices, presentation slides, documentation of progress toward program goals, stakeholder survey results) are posted on the district website, and print copies are available upon request. The District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists communicate to stakeholders any changes to the AIG Plan or related policies (e.g. North Carolina AIG Standards or law) through various means (e.g. district and school websites, newsletters, Parent Nights, conferences, email lists, etc). The District AIG Coordinator meets each month with the AIG Specialists to share plan and policy updates and provides the same information to administrators through monthly AIG updates. Presentations for the Board of Education occur as needed per Board and/or District AIG Coordinator request. The county-wide AIG Advisory Council (as described in Standard 5, Practice C) is instrumental in

sharing information concerning the gifted program.

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program disseminates information about opportunities for AIG students through its school and district websites, as well as AIG brochures and newsletters. Annual DEP/IDEP review meetings with parents of AIG students offer the AIG Specialists a time to update information, listen to concerns, and answer questions concerning the AIG Program and Plan. Updates for school personnel occur annually with a review of AIG procedures by the AIG Specialist as well as in regular grade-level or subject-area team meetings which the AIG Specialist attends. As necessary, the AIG Specialist will present AIG information at scheduled staff meetings. The AIG Specialists and District AIG Coordinator maintain an open door policy, welcoming parents, staff, or any other stakeholders to meet with them as needed to discuss questions about the AIG Program or Plan.

For specific policies related to advanced learning and gifted education, stakeholders are encouraged to review Standard 2, Practice A of the local AIG Plan.

AIG Program materials are provided primarily in English; however, WCS employs a Spanish translator who can translate AIG documents when necessary. Should translation into other languages be necessary, the District AIG Coordinator will coordinate with the Director of Accountability and Federal Programs, who supervises English Learner (EL) teachers, to arrange for translation services.

WCS also employs a Family Resource Coordinator who engages with families from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. The District AIG Coordinator will collaborate with the Family Resource Coordinator to identify effective means to meet directly with these groups and provide information about the WCS AIG Program, including through translation services and translated print materials.

To further ensure equitable opportunities for AIG students who are English learners (ELs), AIG Specialists are encouraged to meet periodically with EL teachers for possible student referrals. Collaborative lessons may be planned by the AIG Specialist and the EL teacher, if needed. The EL teacher may also assist when necessary during Excel Team meetings.

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

1. By September 2022, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists will review AIG Advisory Council membership to ensure diverse representation from WCS personnel, external community partners, and all

demographic groups.

2. By October 2022, the District AIG Coordinator will create a district AIG parent/guardian and community list-serve to foster electronic communication regarding AIG opportunities.
3. By December 2022, the District AIG Coordinator and WHS/WIA School Counselors will develop a webpage designed specifically for AIG students in grades 9-12.
4. By June 2023, the District AIG Coordinator will analyze district demographics in order to identify other languages for translation and arrange for translation of the AIG Plan and supplementary materials into these languages.
5. By June 2024, The AIG District Coordinator and specialists will develop an abbreviated version of the AIG plan to be more readily accessible for parents in both English and Spanish languages.
6. By June 2025, the District AIG Coordinator will collaborate with the WCS Family Resource Coordinator to identify culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse community stakeholder groups and present information on the WCS AIG Program to these groups (with the assistance of an interpreter, if necessary).

Planned Sources of Evidence

- * 1. AIG Advisory Council roster with description of each member's role
- * 2. Completed list-serve of AIG parent/guardians and community members across the district.
- * 3. Completed WHS/WIA AIG webpage
- * 4. Other non-English versions of WCS AIG Program documents, as needed
- * 5. English and Spanish versions of an abbreviated version of the local AIG plan
- * 6. Meeting agendas, minutes, or other materials from District AIG Coordinator meetings with culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse community stakeholder groups

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 5 Additional Resources	N/A	

Standard 6: Program Accountability

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

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 diverse 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.

The Watauga County Schools AIG Program operates under a locally-developed AIG Plan approved by the Board of Education. The plan is written in accordance with state legislation, meets the recommended criteria of the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and is aligned to the North Carolina AIG Program Standards.

In accordance with DPI requirements, the AIG Plan, including the program's vision and goals, is revised and resubmitted every three years. As part of this revision cycle, Watauga County Schools seeks input annually from all stakeholders in this process (as described in Standard 5, Practice C). This input is gathered through self-assessment by the AIG Specialists, surveys completed by AIG students, parents/guardians, classroom teachers, and principals, and discussion among the AIG Specialist Team and AIG Advisory Council. Based on this data, the AIG Plan is revised, submitted to the Watauga County Schools Board of Education for approval, and then sent to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and State Board of Education for review and comment.

The District AIG Coordinator stays abreast of any changes in state gifted education policy through contact with DPI (e.g. through attendance at regional and statewide meetings) and communicates this information in a timely manner to relevant stakeholders (e.g. AIG Specialists, district and school administration, Advisory Council members). The District

AIG Coordinator also provides stakeholders with periodic updates on the AIG Plan development and implementation process, including reports to the local Board of Education upon request.

*** 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.

The AIG plan for Watauga County Schools adheres to North Carolina's AIG legislation, Article 9B, and the North Carolina AIG Program Standards. The successful, faithful implementation of the plan is monitored by the District AIG Coordinator in collaboration with district directors and school administrators. The District AIG Coordinator seeks feedback from directors, administrators, and AIG Specialists regarding the implementation of the plan.

The District AIG Coordinator works with multiple stakeholder groups to ensure awareness and faithful implementation of the AIG Plan. In monitoring the local AIG Program, the District AIG Coordinator may take steps such as:

- Collaborating with AIG Specialists to develop and deliver AIG Plan awareness sessions;
- Delivering annual updates on the WCS AIG Program, including data on academic proficiency and growth, and social-emotional best practices, to groups such as the WCS Board of Education, District Leadership Team, AIG Advisory Council, and AIG Specialist Team;
- Ensuring AIG Specialists develop equitable schedules that administration and classroom teachers adhere to;
- Conducting school visits with AIG Specialists and their administrators;
- Discussing as necessary administrator observations of AIG Specialists;
- Facilitating regular meetings of the AIG Specialist Team and AIG Advisory Council;
- Discussing and seeking input on issues related to gifted education with district and school administration at Curriculum and Instruction and District Leadership Team meetings;
- Facilitating the development, deployment, and analysis of AIG feedback surveys (as described in Standard 5, Practice C);

- Conducting an annual audit of internal AIG records.

*** 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.

The primary factor driving the Watauga County Schools AIG budget is the belief that the presence of a certified AIG Specialist in as many schools as possible is in the best interest of our identified AIG students and the school community as a whole. To this end, the largest annual expenditure in the AIG budget goes toward salary and benefits for AIG Specialists. This funding is possible due to permissible conversion of state funding sources from Program Report Code (PRC) 34 to PRC 10. This budget priority helps ensure high-quality services for identified AIG students, meaningful gifted education, professional learning and collaboration for all faculty and staff, and consistent implementation of the WCS AIG Plan in all schools.

Additional AIG budget funds are used to support AIG Plan implementation, including purposes such as providing AIG Specialists paid professional learning (e.g. contracted guest speakers, state or national conferences) and procuring supplementary resources used in service delivery. Any use of additional AIG funds is driven by purposeful gifted instruction design, informed by available student data, and aligned with the North Carolina AIG Program Standards. The District AIG Coordinator and Specialists consider effective use of available funds through discussion of AIG Plan implementation in monthly meetings as well as their annual self-assessment. The District AIG Coordinator receives a finance report upon request and works in conjunction with the Finance Department to ensure state funds are used appropriately.

To supplement the AIG budget, the District AIG Coordinator and Specialists seek out grant writing opportunities (e.g. through the Appalachian State University Public School Partnership, Bright Ideas, and/or the Watauga Education Foundation). Any grant proposals are written in alignment with the WCS AIG Plan and program goals, and their implementation is monitored by the District AIG Coordinator and Specialists in accordance with the terms of any awarded grants.

*** Practice D**

Maintains and analyzes multiple sources of student achievement and growth data, as well as annual dropout data for

AIG students. Data is disaggregated to recognize patterns and trends over time and inform mindsets, policies, and practices for equity and excellence.

The Watauga County Schools AIG Program is committed to equitable identification and service regardless of a student's identity or background. To this end, we gather and analyze a wide variety of data and provide regular reports to relevant stakeholder groups.

The AIG Specialists and District AIG Coordinator, in collaboration with the Director of Accountability and School Improvement, analyze performance data for identified gifted students on an annual basis. Other individuals, such as the Career and Technical Education Director, Student Services Director, and Chief Academic Officer, may be a part of the data analysis and conversation. This analysis includes achievement on end-of-grade (EOG) and end-of-course (EOC) tests, Advanced Placement (AP) tests, the ACT and/or SAT, as well as student growth data reported by the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS). Other data might include the total number of internships or mentorships, the total number of students participating in dual enrollment, college acceptance figures, scholarship figures, and successful AP completion rates. This data is disaggregated by school, grade, teacher, and student, as well as by various subgroup classifications (e.g. students with disabilities, English Learners, race, ethnicity). This analysis allows the AIG Specialists and District AIG Coordinator to consider whether the academic needs of all students are being equitably served and respond accordingly by adjusting individual student services, improving collaborative differentiation strategies with classroom teachers, and adapting district-wide AIG programming and planning.

Prior to end-of-year assessments, the AIG Specialists and District AIG Coordinator also use data collection and analysis systems (e.g. the Watauga County Schools Early Warning System and/or the Every Child Accountability Tracking System, also known as ECATS) throughout the school year to determine if AIG students are at risk. These systems gather data related to attendance (i.e. number of days or class periods missed), behavior (i.e. number of office discipline referrals), and academics (e.g. universal screening and benchmark assessment results, course grades) and identify students who may be at risk according to research-based thresholds. The AIG Specialists and District AIG Coordinator can then use this information to inform service delivery, including collaboration with other professionals to meet student needs, as well as overall program planning.

The Watauga High School (WHS) / Watauga Innovation Academy (WIA) administrator responsible for gifted education and the Director of Student Services maintain and analyze dropout information. The District AIG Coordinator annually cross-references dropout data with the high school AIG headcount, is present at or obtains information from exit interviews for AIG-identified dropout students, and collaborates with the Director of Student Services, the WHS/WIA

Assistant Principal responsible for gifted education, and the WHS Counseling Department, including the Graduation Coach, to prevent future AIG student dropouts whenever possible.

The District AIG Coordinator provides annual updates on the state of the WCS AIG Program, including analysis of the data sources referenced above and corresponding recommendations, with groups such as the Board of Education, Curriculum and Instruction Team, District MTSS Team, District Leadership Team and AIG Advisory Council. AIG Specialists also provide data updates to appropriate school-based teams such as School Improvement Teams and/or School MTSS Teams. During any discussion of AIG student data, the District AIG Coordinator, Specialists, or any other personnel maintain student confidentiality compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

*** Practice E**

Maintains and analyzes multiple data sources focused on the referral, identification, services, and retention of students within the local AIG program to ensure that students' racial, ethnic, economic, or other demographic factors, including other exceptionalities and language differences, do not reduce their likelihood of access to and participation in gifted education.

The AIG headcounts conducted in November and April of each year provide an essential look into the demographics of identified AIG students in Watauga County Schools. AIG Specialists collaborate with the District AIG Coordinator to verify their student rosters are correctly recorded in the district's student information system (e.g. PowerSchool); the District AIG Coordinator then generates and submits headcount reports, including demographic information such as gender, race/ethnicity, and disabilities, to the Department of Public Instruction.

Upon generating the headcount reports, the District AIG Coordinator then analyzes this data to determine the ratio of each subgroup to the WCS AIG headcount as a whole and then compares these to the subgroup ratios for the entire population of Watauga County Schools. Historic demographic analyses from prior headcounts are also compared in order to determine if trends exist. The District AIG Coordinator shares this analysis with AIG Specialists and other groups (e.g. the Curriculum and Instruction Team, District Leadership Team, District MTSS Team, AIG Advisory Council), which can use this data to determine whether students are equitably identified and retained in the AIG Program and adjust practices accordingly. This information may also prompt other departments to compare figures and identify disproportionality in their procedures and practices.

The District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists monitor academic performance of underrepresented populations as part of the overall academic data analysis for the AIG Program. This process, described in detail in Standard 6,

Practice D, involves gathering available academic data throughout the school year (e.g. from universal screening data, benchmark assessments, and course grades) as well as at its conclusion (e.g. from End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, or Advanced Placement tests, and ACT or SAT results) and disaggregating this data to determine the proficiency and growth of subgroups within the AIG population. Historical academic achievement and growth data is compared across consecutive school years in order to determine what trends are present. The District AIG Coordinator and Specialists can adjust practices accordingly and report findings and action steps to relevant stakeholder groups.

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*** Practice F**

Maintains and utilizes current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving K-12 AIG students to align with the goals and strategies outlined in the local AIG plan.

The Watauga County Schools Human Resources Department maintains up-to-date licensure information through the Human Resource Management System (HRMS). Each teacher hired as an AIG Specialist must either possess current North Carolina AIG licensure or work with the Assistant Superintendent and District AIG Coordinator to develop a time-bound plan (typically, no more than two years) for obtaining add-on certification by completing coursework through an accredited college or university, successfully completing the Gifted Education Praxis Test, or earning a regional endorsement (e.g. through the Northwest Region Educational Services Alliance). The regional endorsement would not constitute a North Carolina teaching license endorsement. The District AIG Coordinator will collaborate with school administrators to look at total gifted placements, individual student needs, and AIG program goals in order to determine the best use of the AIG Specialists.

*** Practice G**

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

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program annually gathers feedback on its programming through surveys administered to AIG students, their parents/guardians, their teachers, and their principals, as well as through an AIG Specialist self-assessment. Each of these surveys are aligned with the North Carolina AIG standards. AIG Specialists

also complete an annual AIG Performance Review, which is submitted (along with any supporting documentation) to the District AIG Coordinator by June 10 of each year. Once survey results are received, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists analyze school- and district-level data, discuss its implications on practice, and share this information with appropriate stakeholders (e.g. school and district administration, the AIG Advisory Council, and the WCS Board of Education). Data from the surveys that are appropriate for public consumption are posted on the district AIG website.

In addition to annual surveys, the WCS AIG Program uses a variety of other means to continuously gather feedback. During annual conferences, parents/guardians of AIG students can provide verbal or written feedback via their student's DEP/IDEP. AIG Specialists also maintain open parent communication (e.g. in person, via phone, virtual conferencing and/or email) throughout the school year and meet regularly with classroom teachers to seek their feedback and design instruction accordingly. Regularly scheduled meetings of the AIG Advisory Council offer another venue for feedback. The District AIG Coordinator also seeks feedback through collaborative conversations with those of the Curriculum and Instruction Team, the District Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Team, and the District Leadership Team. Similarly, the AIG Specialists obtain feedback through established school-level meetings including those of School Improvement Teams, grade levels and subject-areas, or other Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists maintain an open door communication policy, allowing concerns and suggestions to be handled professionally, efficiently and effectively.

* **Practice H**

Facilitates a comprehensive evaluation of the local AIG program utilizing multiple sources of data to revise the local AIG plan every three years.

Watauga County Schools seeks to continuously improve its AIG Program through decision making informed by qualitative and quantitative data from various stakeholder groups. These sources of data may include (but are not limited to):

- Student academic performance and growth data (e.g. formative assessment data, course grades, End-of-Grade, End-of-Course, Educator Value-Added Assessment System reports);
- Annual AIG feedback survey data from identified AIG students and their parents/guardians, classroom teachers, and principals;

- AIG Specialist self-assessments and AIG Annual Performance Reviews (as described in Standard 6, Practice G);
- AIG professional development feedback and requests from classroom teachers;
- Discussions during stakeholder meetings (e.g. school staff, District Leadership Team, AIG Specialists, AIG Advisory Council);
- Updates received during regional, state, and/or national meetings (e.g. regional and statewide District AIG Coordinators' meetings, North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented annual conference).

Additionally, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists use the “Ideas for Strengthening the Standard” and “Sources of Evidence” sections within the WCS AIG Plan to set specific, detailed program goals and describe the evidence of these goals being successfully met. The District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists can then develop plans to meet these goals, assess progress, and communicate this information to school and district administration, the AIG Advisory Council, and other stakeholder groups.

The District AIG Coordinator, AIG Specialists, and AIG Advisory Council regularly discuss these goals and data sources to identify current successes and possible improvements in the WCS AIG Program to ensure the best possible outcomes for all gifted learners in WCS. Data sources are analyzed across academic years and graduation cohorts to identify patterns and trends. AIG Program goals are continually monitored by the District AIG Coordinator to ensure alignment with the district’s vision, mission, policies, practices, and procedures.

The District AIG Coordinator relays any changes to school and district administration and the AIG Advisory Council. The District AIG Coordinator presents any recommended changes in the AIG Plan to the local Board of Education for approval and informs all stakeholders about any AIG Plan revisions. This may occur within the three year cycle if new data suggests a need for policy change.

*** Practice I**

Shares all data from local AIG program evaluation with school and district personnel, students, parents/guardians, families, and other community stakeholders.

The District AIG Coordinator and Specialists seek to ensure the operation of the Watauga County Schools AIG Program is transparent to the public. A primary means of this transparency is the AIG Program website, which houses

the following information (all of which is available in print upon request):

- The AIG Plan and its appendices;
- Frequently asked questions
- Contact information for the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists;
- Information on the current goals of the WCS AIG Program;
- Annual WCS AIG Program evaluation data;
- Other resources to support and assist gifted students and their families.

Any stakeholder may request any of the above information to be translated into a different language. This request should be directed to the District AIG Coordinator.

The District AIG Coordinator presents AIG Program evaluation data (as outlined in Standard 6, Practice H) and progress toward program goals to the AIG Specialists, school administrators, district directors, the AIG Advisory Council, and the local Board of Education. Program evaluation data is presented in aggregated forms in order to protect the confidentiality of individual survey respondents. Testing and Accountability information is posted on the district website and made available to other media sources. All stakeholders are invited to ask follow up questions regarding this data to the District AIG Coordinator.

*** Practice J**

Safeguards the rights of all AIG students and their parents/guardians 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.

The Watauga County Schools (WCS) AIG Program recognizes its duty to safeguard the rights of its students and their parents/guardians. To this end, the District AIG Coordinator and AIG Specialists follow policies and procedures to protect student privacy, resolve disagreements, ensure the provision of appropriate educational services, and appropriately destroy confidential records. These policies and procedures are developed in accordance with all

applicable local, state, and federal laws, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 115C, Article 9B, 115C-150.8 (Review of Disagreements). Parents/guardians are informed of these policies and procedures through the public posting of the AIG Plan on the district website, as well as communication with their school's AIG Specialist.

Informed Consent Regarding Identification and Services

Parents/guardians who feel their child may be gifted should discuss this with the classroom teacher and AIG Specialist (or, in grades 9-12, the School Counselor). These educators will meet with families to provide an overview of the AIG Plan, review available student data, and discuss possible referral for Excel Team consideration, if appropriate.

When a school Excel Team identifies a student as gifted based on the criteria in Standard 1, Practice B and the AIG Specialist has developed a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individual Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP), the AIG Specialist schedules a meeting with parent/guardian to discuss the AIG Program, review the student's services, and sign the Student Placement Form and DEP/IDEP. AIG Specialists then meet with parents/guardians annually to review DEPs/IDEPs, providing an opportunity for parents/guardians to ask any questions or share any feedback they may have. Parents/guardians may also contact their AIG Specialist and/or the District AIG Coordinator at any time for assistance, questions, or feedback. Parents/guardians may opt out of receiving AIG services if desired, and the AIG Specialist would document this decision.

Reassessment Procedures

In the course of the screening and referral process, Excel Teams may require additional assessment data to reach identification decisions. This may include readministering the same form of assessment a student had previously taken (within timeframes permitted by the assessment guidelines) or administering an alternative assessment form to gather additional information in the same area. In any case of additional assessment beyond the third grade universal aptitude screening (e.g. CogAT), AIG Specialists will notify parent/guardian using the Consent for Evaluation form, which specifies the type of assessment(s) needed. (The Consent for Evaluation form will not indicate the specific assessment to be used since this may vary based on the professional judgment of the assessor.) Parents/guardians may deny permission for additional assessments and should discuss this decision with the AIG Specialist. Additional testing cannot proceed without the parent/guardian's written consent.

If, after receiving and reviewing additional assessment data, the Excel Team determines gifted education services are not appropriate, the AIG Specialist will communicate this decision to the parents/guardians. If the family disagrees

with this decision, they may choose to proceed with the Procedures for Resolving Disagreements outlined later in this section.

Transfers from other LEAs

Students entering WCS who have been previously identified as gifted by a North Carolina public school, as evidenced by the "AIG Program" tab in PowerSchool SIS records, will automatically be enrolled in the WCS AIG program. The AIG Specialist may choose to bring these transfer students to the Excel Team in order to help determine the most appropriate service delivery option. As a reminder, documentation of parent involvement is required for placement in any AIG service delivery options. (See Standard 1, Practice F for more information on documentation.) Students entering WCS who have been previously identified as gifted outside of a North Carolina public school, including all charter and homeschool students, must meet the criteria as presented in the WCS AIG Plan for formal identification. Excel Teams will reach a decision when all required documentation has been received and reviewed but no later than 45 school days from the date of transfer. In this situation, the AIG Specialist will notify the parent/guardian once the Excel Team has reached a decision.

Procedures for Resolving Disagreements

To resolve concerns and questions regarding the identification and service options for AIG students, parents/guardians should contact the classroom teacher, AIG Specialist, and principal to establish a meeting to discuss issues of referral, identification, or services. The procedure for resolving disagreements will proceed as follows:

- Level I: School Site Review -- If parents/guardians have a disagreement concerning search and nomination, identification, or services, they may request in writing a meeting with the principal and AIG Specialist. Other personnel may be requested to attend this meeting as deemed appropriate. This meeting should occur within ten (10) days of receipt of the written request.
- Level II: Administrative Review -- If the disagreement is not resolved at the site level, the parent/guardian may appeal in writing to the District AIG Coordinator within ten (10) days of the school site decision. The District AIG Coordinator and the Superintendent or his/her designee will review the case and respond to the parents/guardians and the principal in writing within ten (10) days of receipt of the appeal.
- Level III: School Board Review -- If agreement cannot be reached administratively, the parents/guardians may appeal in writing to the Watauga County Board of Education within ten (10) days of the administrative review.

The school board will offer a written decision to the parents/guardians, the principal, the District AIG Coordinator, and the Superintendent (or designee) within thirty (30) days.

- Level IV: Administrative Law Hearing -- As stated in North Carolina General Statutes Chapter 115C, Article 9B, 115C-150.8 (Review of Disagreements), if mediation fails to resolve the disagreement satisfactorily, the parents/guardians may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the North Carolina General Statutes. The scope of the hearing will be limited to consideration of:

- Whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an academically/intellectually gifted student, or
- Whether the local plan of services for the student has been implemented appropriately.

Following the hearing, the administrative law judge will make a decision based on the findings of fact and conclusions of law. The decision of the administrative law judge becomes final, is binding on all parties, and is not subject to further review under Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. Attorney fees are the responsibility of the parents/guardians.

Destruction of Records

The Watauga County Board of Education recognizes that the confidentiality of records of AIG students must be maintained and that non-current records of AIG students should be destroyed. The confidential records of identified AIG students may be destroyed no earlier than five (5) years after an identified AIG student has graduated or exited the program due to opt-out or relocation outside of WCS. Watauga County Board of Education Policy 3580, "Destruction of Non-Current Records of Students with Disabilities," outlines the process for the destruction of Exceptional Children's records; the AIG Program follows these guidelines for destruction of AIG student records.

Eligible records will be destroyed annually, and the District AIG Coordinator will disseminate public notice of annual records destruction (e.g. through local newspapers and on the WCS website) 90 days prior to this destruction. Families may request copies of records prior to their destruction and/or may request documents be destroyed ahead of schedule; the District AIG Coordinator will honor these requests as promptly as possible.



[Click here to remove the table and use only the narrative field.](#)

*** Ideas for Strengthening the Standard**

1. By August 2022, the District AIG Coordinator will update the district AIG website with program goals, evaluation data, shared presentation slides, and other informative ancillary materials.
2. By June 2024, the District AIG Coordinator and Specialists will develop an AIG Student Bill of Rights.

Planned Sources of Evidence

- * 1. Updated district AIG website
- * 2. Completed AIG Student Bill of Rights
- * 3. Feedback from all stakeholders (emails, surveys, etc.)

Documents

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Standard 6 Additional Resources	N/A	 WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 References

Local Board of Education Approval

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

* Approved by local Board of Education on:

05/09/2022 

Original Application Submission Date: 06/16/2022

Documents

Type	Document Template	Document/Link
Local Board of Education Approval Signatures [Upload at least 1 document(s)]	 <u>Local Board of Education Approval Template</u>	 <u>Watauga BOE Approval of AIG Plan</u>

AIG Related Documents

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

Required Documents		
Type	Document Template	Document/Link
Local Board of Education Approval Signatures [Upload at least 1 document(s)]	 <u>Local Board of Education Approval Template</u>	 <u>Watauga BOE Approval of AIG Plan</u>
Optional Documents		
Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Glossary [Upload up to 1 document(s)]	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Glossary</u>
AIG Standard 1 Additional Resources	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix A: Identification Flowchart and Criteria</u>  <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix B: WCS AIG Demographics</u>
AIG Standard 2 Additional Resources	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix C: Array of Services</u>
AIG Standard 3 Additional Resources	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025</u>

	<u>Appendix D: AIG in an MTSS</u>	
AIG Standard 4 Additional Resources	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Appendix E: Personnel Roles and Responsibilities</u>
AIG Standard 5 Additional Resources	N/A	
AIG Standard 6 Additional Resources	N/A	 <u>WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 References</u>

Glossary

Watauga County Schools (950) Regular Local School District - FY 2022 - Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted Plan, 2022-2025 - Rev 0

Phrase	Definition
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The Local AIG Plan glossary is provided in an uploaded document.

Documents		
Type	Document Template	Document/Link
AIG Glossary [Upload up to 1 document(s)]	N/A	 WCS AIG Plan 2022-2025 Glossary .