

North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards

State Board of Education Policy ACIG-000 – July 2024

Historical Overview of Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) in NC

North Carolina has had legislation governing gifted education since 1961, exemplifying the state's strong commitment to gifted education for over sixty years. In 1974, state legislation identified gifted and handicapped children as children with special needs. In 1977, Chapter 927 in the NC Session Laws brought into compliance a system of educational opportunities for all children requiring special education. In 1983, Chapter 247 in the NC Session Laws revised the program title to "Academically Gifted" to emphasize North Carolina's commitment to academic programs and legislated that a student's gifted education program may be described with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a Group Education Plan (GEP). In 1993, Chapter 321, Section 134(c) in NC Session Laws, required that the State Board of Education "reexamine the State's laws, rules, and policies concerning the education of academically gifted children." As a result, new legislation for gifted education was passed in 1996, resulting in *Article 9B, Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students* [N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5-.8 (Article 9B)]. Article 9B provides a state definition for Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students and requires local education agencies (LEA) to develop three-year Local AIG Plans with specific components, to be approved by local school boards and subsequently sent to the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for review and comment. Article 9B is the current legislation mandating identification and services for gifted education K-12.

State Definition of AIG Students, Article 9B (N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5) ACIG-002

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. ~ 115C-150.5-.8 (Article 9B), academically and/or intellectually gifted students are defined as students who:

- perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.
- exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both the intellectual areas and specific academic fields.
- require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program.

Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.

Rationale for the AIG Program Standards

"The General Assembly believes that public schools should challenge all students to aim for academic excellence" (Article 9B). The State Board of Education's (SBE) vision is that "Every public school student in North Carolina will be empowered to accept academic challenges, prepared to pursue their chosen path after graduating high school, and encouraged to become lifelong learners with the capacity to engage in a globally-collaborative society." Therefore, quality and comprehensive AIG programs are essential in supporting these goals and meeting the advanced learning needs of students, including those identified as gifted across North Carolina.

In January 2008, the North Carolina AIG program, under the auspices of the Exceptional Children Division of DPI, received a performance audit through the Office of the State Auditor. The audit was initiated in response to parent/family concerns that state allocated AIG funds were being used for purposes other than AIG programming, while AIG students were left underserved. One of the recommendations of the audit was to develop state performance standards for local AIG programs in order to provide a statewide vehicle for monitoring program implementation, to support quality and effective local AIG programs, and to safeguard the rights of AIG students. Local gifted programs, and subsequently the growth of gifted learners, are heavily influenced by the strength of the initiatives emanating from the state level. Moreover, in the absence of federal legislation, state policies and legislation are the cornerstone of gifted programming.

AIG programs in North Carolina are embedded within and responsive to the local context of an LEA and, as a result, give rise to differences among programs across the state. Therefore, the AIG Program Standards

are critical in providing a statewide framework for quality programming, while still honoring local flexibility. In an effort to strengthen gifted education in North Carolina, these AIG Program Standards represent the SBE's and DPI's commitment to ensure that the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students are being met and cultivated.

Since State Board of Education approval in 2009, the AIG Program Standards have served the purpose of guiding local plan development. In each of the years preceding the submission of a new three-year Local AIG Plan, the NC AIG Program Standards are carefully reviewed with feedback from various stakeholders to determine if revisions are necessary to further support the development of high quality gifted programs. These 2024 AIG Program Standards revisions embed the language of the new statewide Portrait of a Graduate initiative while continuing to synergize with NCDPI's Critical Actions to Realize Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education. North Carolina's goal is to promote both equity and excellence. To set the foundation of realizing both equity and excellence, we must recognize that both are integral to a successful educational environment. The revision process assures that the program standards provide clear direction and support for the comprehensive nature of an effective local plan and program for serving gifted learners in North Carolina's public schools.

Foundations of the AIG Program Standards

The AIG Program Standards are based on the following principles*:

Gifted learners form a diverse group of students with a variety of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs different than those of other children of their age,



experience, and environment; therefore, they require appropriate identification and a range of service options within a comprehensive program.

Gifted learners possess the ability to think with more complexity and abstraction and learn at faster rates; therefore, they require challenging, differentiated curriculum and instruction which are developmentally appropriate and will prepare them for the future.

Gifted learners have different learning needs; therefore, they require time with others who are similar to themselves in order to establish cognitive relationships and to facilitate their academic, intellectual, social, and emotional growth.

Gifted learners have some unique social and emotional needs; therefore, they require access to appropriate support systems and counseling to assure their affective well-being.

Gifted learners have needs different than others of their age, experience or environment; therefore, they require teachers and other personnel involved in their education who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and understandings to meet those needs.

Gifted learners, including those children with limited educational opportunities, are shaped by their early education experiences which impact future learning; therefore, they need access to an appropriately challenging and engaging education early in their schooling to ensure that their potential is developed and optimized.

Gifted learners are present in every school and district; therefore, they require services which must be part of an overall educational program supporting equity and excellence for all students.

Gifted learners from under-represented populations are often overlooked in gifted programming; therefore, they require purposeful and intentional support to ensure that their potential is cultivated, recognized, and served. Gifted learners who are often left underserved include students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, multilingual learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

When an appropriately differentiated education is not provided, gifted learners do not thrive in school, their potential is diminished, and they may even suffer from cognitive and affective harm; therefore, gifted learners must have their needs addressed in order to become capable, valuable, effective, and successful contributors to our global society.

Equity and excellence for all students in North Carolina is an urgent priority; therefore, local AIG programs and plans must reflect intentional and sustained actions that do not compound societal inequities, but rather change mindsets, policies and practices to optimize learning for all students.

* Adapted with permission of the authors. Coleman, M. R. & Gallagher, J.J. (1995). Appropriate differentiated services: Guides for best practices in the education of gifted children. *Gifted Child Today*, 18(5), 32-33.

Purposes of the AIG Program Standards

Programs for the gifted differ in response to local needs and resources, but successful program design takes into account a common set of components. According to Reis (2006), a cohesive, thoughtful, and comprehensive gifted program design serves three major functions. First, it communicates which students' needs will be met and how. Second, it communicates a plan for implementation and coordination among the design components. Third, it provides a framework for decision-making and continuous program improvement.

The North Carolina AIG Program Standards have been developed to serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate, and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs. These standards reflect Article 9B, nationally-accepted best practices in gifted education, and respond to the needs of NC's schools and districts. Furthermore, the AIG Program Standards operationalize NC's Critical Actions to Realize Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education to increase access and opportunities and increase achievement and growth for all. NC's schools and districts must take actions to ensure the needs of AIG students are met and the potential of AIG students is optimally developed.

Through an equity and excellence lens, these AIG Program Standards will:

- convey expectations for quality local AIG programs and services;
- guide the development, revision, and monitoring of local AIG programs;
- articulate best practices for local AIG programs, including those related to student identification, differentiated curriculum and instruction, and comprehensive programming;
- provide a guide for AIG personnel and professional development;
- promote strong partnerships and communication between and among home, school, and community; and
- serve as a vehicle for continuous program improvement and accountability.

Organization of the AIG Program Standards

Each standard is formatted as follows:

Standard: The standard is a defining statement articulating the State Board of Education expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs and relates to the categories addressed in Article 9B.

Practices: The practices clarify the standard, describe what an LEA must have in place, and guide LEAs for program improvement. These practices will be verified to stakeholders through a variety of sources of evidence.



Standard 1: Student Identification

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

PRACTICES

- a) Develops both screening and referral processes that lead to AIG identification at all grade levels. Provides opportunities, including universal screening, for every student to show their strengths and talents.
- b) Establishes a process and criteria for AIG student identification at all grade levels, K-12, 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.
- 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, multilingual learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.
- d) Monitors the screening, referral, and identification processes for consistent implementation across the LEA.

- e) Disseminates information regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes to school personnel, parents/guardians, students, and the community-at-large.
- f) Documents the evidence gathered and analyzed to support an AIG identification decision. This documentation is reviewed with parents/guardians and maintained in student records.
- g) 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 developed and reviewed annually with parents/guardians to ensure effective programming, provide a continuum of services, and support school transitions.

- f) Communicates among and between teachers and schools to ensure an effective continuation of K-12 services, especially at key transition points.
- 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.
- h) Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students with early intervention and talent development opportunities through purposeful and intentional programming.
- i) Develops mindsets, policies, and practices to promote equity and excellence by broadening access to advanced learning opportunities through a variety of talent development efforts, including frontloading, in grades 4-12.
- j) Enhances and further develops the talents and interests of AIG students through extra-curricular programming during and outside of the school day.

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.

PRACTICES

- a) Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the academic and intellectual needs of AIG students across all grade levels, K-12, and learning environments, through collaboration with a variety of personnel. Services are aligned to students' advanced learning needs and AIG identification.
- b) Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the social and emotional needs of AIG students across all grade levels, K-12, and learning environments, through collaboration with a variety of personnel based on student needs.
- c) Integrates and connects the AIG program and services with the district's priorities and resources through policy and practice.
- d) Develops procedures for intentional, flexible grouping practices to facilitate the achievement and growth of AIG and other students with advanced learning needs.
- 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.



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.

PRACTICES

- 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 by differentiating curriculum and instruction, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration strategies.
- b) Uses students' identified abilities, readiness, and interests to address a range of learning needs K-12.

- c) Incorporates a variety of evidence-based resources that address the range of academic, intellectual, and social and emotional needs of AIG students.
- d) Fosters the development of durable skills and mindsets which support post-secondary success. These skills include adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, and personal responsibility.
- e) Uses ongoing assessment, both formative and summative, to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction.
- f) Collaborates with a variety of personnel, based on student needs, to implement differentiated curriculum and instruction.

- d) Provides general education services by personnel who have earned an AIG add-on license or have met the LEA requirements for that position.
- e) Develops strategies for the recruitment and retention of AIG-licensed professionals, including those of diverse backgrounds.
- f) Provides focused professional learning opportunities to realize equity and excellence in gifted education including changing mindsets, policies, and practices.
- 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.

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.

PRACTICES

- a) Employs an AIG-licensed educator as lead coordinator to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program and plan.
- b) Engages AIG-licensed specialists in tasks that explicitly address the academic, intellectual, and social and emotional needs of K-12 AIG students and supports the implementation of the local AIG program and plan.
- 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.



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.

PRACTICES

- a) Develops intentional, two-way partnerships with parents/guardians to support the following needs of AIG students:
 - academic and intellectual
 - social and emotional
- 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.
- 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.
- d) Informs all students, parents/guardians, and the community of the following:
 - Local AIG Plan
 - Local AIG program services
 - Policies and procedures relating to advanced learning and gifted education
 - Ways to access advanced learning opportunities
 Communication is ongoing and responds to the diverse language and other needs of the community.

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.

PRACTICES

- 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]), based on a comprehensive program evaluation. This Local AIG Plan has been approved by the local board of education and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.
- 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.
- 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.
- d) Maintains and analyzes multiple sources of student achievement and growth data, as well as annual drop-out data for AIG students. Data is disaggregated to recognize patterns and trends over time and inform mindsets, policies, and practices for equity and excellence.
- 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.
- 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.
- g) Elicits regular feedback from students, parents/guardians, families, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the ongoing implementation and effectiveness of the local AIG program to support continuous program improvement.
- h) Shares local AIG program evaluation data with school and district personnel, students, parents/guardians, families, and other community stakeholders.
- i) 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.



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North Carolina's goal is to promote both equity and excellence, and to support that effort, these 2024 NC AIG Program Standards synergize with NCDPI's Critical Actions to Realize Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education. To learn more about our strategic initiative, visit the Division of Advanced Learning & Gifted Education website: A Call to Action: Equity and Excellence: (<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/enhanced-opportunities/advanced-learning-and-gifted-education/call-action-equity-and-excellence>)

References

- Coleman, M. R. & Gallagher, J. J. (1995). Appropriate Differentiated Services: Guides for best practices in the education of gifted children. *Gifted Child Today*, 18(5), 32-33.
- North Carolina General Statutes, Article 9B, § 115C-150.5-8. *Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students*, 1996.
- Reis, S. (2006). *Program evaluation in gifted education*. Essential Readings in Gifted Education, vol. 11, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

