

High Ability Program

Bethel Park Elementary

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Mission and Belief Statements

The High Ability Program works toward the maximum intellectual development of high ability students in an atmosphere that recognizes the uniqueness of the individual.

The high ability educational environment assists students as they reach their social, psychological, intellectual, physical, and creative potential.

We believe that high ability students will...

- Be challenged to reach their full potential;
- Be provided leadership roles and responsibilities;
- Need qualitatively different experiences apart from the general curriculum;
- Benefit from interactions with varying populations of students;
- Be guided to be creative, independent, and critical in their thinking, problem-solving, and daily work;
- Require nurturing and understanding to promote healthy, social, and emotional well-being;
- Engage in cooperative learning activities in order to develop a sense of teamwork and camaraderie.

Requirements for Serving High Ability Students

The Indiana Code sets forth certain requirements for Indiana school corporations related to the education of students with high ability. Indiana Administrative Code gives further explanation for some of these requirements. The requirements are summarized below.

The corporation must ...

1. Identify students with high ability in all grades, K-12, in accordance with the Indiana Definition of High Ability Student. The Indiana definition is: “High ability student” means a student who: performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one (1) domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests.

While there are additional domains of high ability that may be served (for example, visual and performing arts), the required domains of high ability that Indiana schools must identify for are the General Intellectual and Specific Academic domains. For now, the designations are for students with high ability in Language Arts (HA-LA), students with high ability in Math (HA-Math), and students who have high ability in both Language Arts and Math (HA - General Intellectual).

2. Record the relevant designation on the Student Test Number (STN), HA-LA, HA-Math, or HA-General Intellectual.
3. Provide “appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction” to identified students in the relevant core content area(s).
4. Provide professional development in high ability education.
5. Establish a Broad Based Planning Committee that will meet at least once per year to review the program.
6. Evaluate the program.
7. Align with the strategic and continuous school improvement and achievement plans under IC 20-31-5-4 for schools within the school corporation.
8. Report annually to the IDOE on the programs and how the state grant to the corporation for high ability programs was used.
9. Report on the results of the program, including student achievement and program effectiveness.

Broad Based Planning Committee

Mission

The Bethel Park Elementary Broad Based Planning Committee is committed to researching and understanding the needs of high ability students in order to make meaningful recommendations that will ultimately maximize opportunities for the students to attain their highest potential.

Composition of Required Broad Based Planning Committee

“Broad-based planning committee” means a diverse group with representation from:

1. Educators;
2. Parents;
3. Students;
4. Community members; and
5. Other stakeholders;

Organized for the purposes of planning and development of programs.

Members should have an interest in and support for high ability education. Members should also include decision-makers within the corporation. The High Ability Coordinator keeps a record of official members, including contact information.

Purpose of the Broad Based Planning Committee

- Representation of key stakeholders
- Sounding board for programmatic ideas
- Keeper of the vision for high ability education
- Assessor of the degree to which program goals are being met
- Impetus for improvement
- Ambassador for high ability services in the community

Although the local governing body has ultimate responsibility and authority for all student services, the committee has the role of planning and reviewing policies and services. Suggested roles for the Broad Based Planning Committee include the following:

- Review the 5 required written plans that are to be available for public inspection (511 IAC 6-9.1-1)
 - Multifaceted Student Assessment Plan
 - Curriculum & Instructional Strategies Plan
 - Counseling & Guidance Plan
 - Systematic Program Assessment Plan
 - Professional Development Plan
- Review implementation of the 5 required plans

- Review the results of the programs for students with high ability, including student assessment results, program effectiveness, or student achievement (IC 20-36-2)
- Prepare an action plan for improvement related to the 5 plans
- Develop a collaborative relationship between school staff(s) and the committee
- Develop a 3-5 year strategic plan for program development

Characteristics of High Ability Students

The Indiana Code defines a “high ability student” as one who: (1) performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and (2) is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests (IC 20-36-1-3).

A Bright Child	A Gifted Child
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Works hard	Plays around, yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discussed in detail; elaborates
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings/opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes the assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates new designs
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good memorizer	Good guesser
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with learning	Is highly self-critical

** These are generalizations and are not sole indicators of a gifted child **

Programming and Identification

Introduction & Rationale

Effective July 1, 2007, Indiana schools shall identify students with high ability in the general intellectual and specific academic domains and provide them with appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction in core content areas, K-12 (refer to IC-20-36-2-2). Specific identification processes remain a local decision and will vary according to district size, building configurations, demographics, etc. There are, however, best practices for identification; this document is based upon Indiana requirements and those best practices and is meant to be a guide in identifying high ability students for services in the general intellectual and specific academic domains. The term “high ability” is used in Indiana; in this guide sometimes the term “gifted” is used. When that occurs, the related information may have come from the field of gifted education and may reference a somewhat narrower definition of this group of students.

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The high ability educational environment assists students as they reach their social-psychological, intellectual, physical, and creative potential.

Program Continuum

Assessment criteria from CogAT and trend data from NWEA determine placement. Instruction is differentiated to meet the highly challenging needs of the identified students. Students can qualify in reading, mathematics, or both. All students will take the CogAT three times during their elementary career, grades K, 2, and 5.

All kindergarten, 2nd, and 5th grade students take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) during the spring. This test identifies the pool of students who will receive differentiated instruction based upon their needs in grades K-6. The goal is to identify students who exemplify truly academic giftedness or very high cognitive ability; therefore students who have scores within the local norm band of 90-100th percentile will be tagged for a different service option in the classroom.

Students will also take the NWEA adaptive achievement test in September, January, and May. This assessment shows how a student actually performs in the academic areas of reading, language, and mathematics. Students who score at or above the 90th percentile on the NWEA assessment in reading, mathematics, or both will be reflected in the student data system.

Service Options

A comprehensive review of the research (Rogers, 2007) indicates that services leading to the greatest achievement gains for high ability students include the following:

- Acceleration: Opportunities for various forms of subject and grade acceleration as needed
- Differentiation: Differentiation in pace, amount of review and practice, focus on larger concepts, and interdisciplinary connections
- Daily Challenge: Opportunity for daily challenge in identified areas of high ability
- Ability Grouping: Opportunities for high ability learners to socialize and to learn with like-ability peers
- Independent Work: Opportunities to work independently in areas of passion and talent.

Services for students of high ability must be interrelated with the general education program. Services must be designed from a theoretical, research-based, and practical perspective. Programming and services must also reflect the knowledge of how students of high ability develop and learn. This programming must include appropriate curriculum, acceleration, instructional strategies, assessment, and evaluation. One specific type of programming for students of high ability cannot meet the needs of the many levels and types of talents and abilities evidenced by these students, K-12. Therefore, a variety of services and programming options are needed and described below.

When planning appropriate programming and services for students of high ability, corporations must consider the following:

1. How different students will be grouped, organized, or provided with individual plans for the most effective learning;
2. What training the teacher has or needs to most effectively teach and plan learning experiences for students of high ability;
3. What content, standards, and pace are most appropriate for these students; and
4. What instructional models, strategies, projects, and products are most appropriate and will promote academic growth.

Typical Service Options

Grades K-5 Service Options		
Options for services	Considerations <i>Flexibility is key; different options might work in different grades for different students. Avoid having one "Program" which is the only option</i>	Added Cost

Early entrance to kindergarten	Good for students who are HA, academically advanced, socially mature, independent, and motivated. Children may also need advanced curriculum and instruction in new grade placement. Use Iowa Acceleration Scale to facilitate decision making.	None
Skipping kindergarten for direct placement in first grade		
Grade skipping		
Subject skipping	Good for the student who is achieving well beyond others in a single subject.	None
Cluster groups	This can be a practical solution when there are not enough students of high ability for a separate class. It is best that this class not also have another special needs group.	None
Ability grouped classes for students of high ability by subject area with HA licensed teachers	This can combine students who are of high ability in general intellectual area with those who are of high ability in a specific academic area.	None
Self-contained multi-age split	Full-time placement with other students of high ability and differentiated curriculum and instruction by a High Ability licensed teacher produces the greatest academic gains for HA students.	None if class sizes remain same
Fulltime, self-contained class with High Ability licensed teacher		
Individual options: internships, mentorships, distance learning, IEP	Can be used in combination with other options	None

Grade 6-8 Service Options		
Options for services	Considerations	Added Cost
	<i>Flexibility is key; different options might work in different grades for different students. Avoid having one "Program" which is the only option</i>	
Early entrance to high school	Some students can skip a full year or do a semester in seventh grade and a semester in eighth grade.	None
Grade or subject skipping -	The student should be allowed to go to the	None

Some may be ready to skip a level or two of math, science, or foreign language	high school for certain subjects if needed; this option is also called dual enrollment.	
Special advanced classes or “honors” classes by subject with G/T licensed teachers	This can combine students who are HA in general intellectual with those who are HA in a specific academic area.	None

Grades 9-12 Service Options		
Options for services	Considerations <i>Flexibility is key; different options might work in different grades for different students. Avoid having one “Program” which is the only option</i>	Added Cost
Graduation before the senior year	Useful when a student can demonstrate academic functioning at the college level or has exhausted the most rigorous courses offered at the high school. Often these students have many years of college and advanced degrees ahead of them and have the maturity to begin that work early.	None, but revenue is lost per pupil enrollment in grade 12
Credit by examination	This credit without seat time if proficiency is demonstrated.	None
Advanced or “Honors” classes by subject	The curriculum and expectations are more rigorous than the regular option.	None
Special classes that are interdisciplinary, teach subjects not usually taught in high school, or are seminars especially designed for students of high ability	Examples of these might include a double class in American history and literature or a philosophy course.	None
Distance learning classes from universities or Advanced Placement courses through distance learning	These require a student who is self-directed and a teacher who can monitor progress and provide onsite help.	Tuition for online courses
Dual enrollment in high school and college	Investigate the course requirements and any tuition required for credit. Be certain	Tuition for university credit

	this is a better option than the more widely accepted Advanced Placement.	
Advanced Placement courses	Curriculum, teacher training, and exams offered by the College Board. These should be available prior to the senior year.	AP exam fees
Individual options: internships, mentorships, foreign study, IEP	Can be used in combination with other options	None

Cluster Grouping as One Service Option or Model for Services

Cluster grouping is a very popular service option in Indiana due to its versatility and ability to be used in small schools. As a result, a description of this service option is expanded upon below. When identifying students for the cluster groups, it is important to remember not to identify on the basis of achievement alone but rather to consider both high performance as well as the potential for high performance as required in the mandate for identifying and serving high ability students. Best practice would be to complete the formal identification process first and then determine cluster group placement after students have been formally identified.

Features:

All students are purposefully placed to reduce the number of instructional groups for all classrooms.

- All classes have strong students.
- All classes have average learners. When new students move in who are in the average range (68% of students are within one standard deviation of the mean), they could be placed in any of the classes thereby making sizes of classes able to be kept fairly even.
- The class that includes the lowest students is likely to have additional assistance available for those students in their core instruction (IEPs).
- No teacher has more than 3 instructional groups or the full range of learners.
- The class with the gifted learners should have only two instructional groups as that teacher will need to further differentiate within the gifted group and usually has the additional responsibility for developing curriculum for that group.
- If a student is identified as needing services just in language arts, depending on their math performance they could stay in the gifted classroom receiving instruction with the average math group during math time or they can go to one of the other classrooms for math with the above average math group during math time. Similarly for those gifted in math and not in language arts.
- Only one teacher would have to have training in gifted education.

RTI Process and Exit Procedures

If a student, parent, or teacher believes a high ability placement for services is no longer appropriate, he or she may do the following:

1. Arrange a conference with the parties involved, including the parent, administrator, and the teacher providing services. This conference may be a telephone conference.
2. Parent, student, teacher, and administrator examine issues of concern and discuss interventions that may be implemented.
3. Participants agree on an RTI plan not less than one semester to implement interventions.
4. At the end of the RTI timeline, the parent, student, teacher, and administrator meet to review progress and determine whether or not the student should exit services.
5. If an exit is deemed appropriate, the parent signs permission to remove the student from high ability placement and services.
6. Parent permission for exit and documentation of meetings/interventions are sent to the high ability coordinator.
7. High ability coordinator removes high ability flag for student in database.

Counseling Plan

Social and Emotional Challenges of the High Ability Student

There are a cluster of traits and issues that seem to have a higher incidence among HA students. Many of these are potential strengths. However, as with anything in life, if these tendencies are overly strong and hindering daily functioning (impacting eating, sleeping, or social interactions), they may signal a problem that needs to be addressed. Small group and individual counseling may be available from your school counselor if you observe any of the following on an ongoing basis:

- **Overexcitability**
 - Intense, almost exclusive focus on a particular topic
 - Sensitivity to their environment (noise, light, taste, feel of certain clothing items and even allergies)
 - Excess physical energy
 - Vivid imagination and even dreams
 - Heightened sensitivity to criticism, perfectionism
 - Heightened awareness and intolerance for the discomfort of others (extreme empathy for homelessness or animal abuse)
- **Asynchronous Development**
 - While academic achievement is above grade level, emotional or physical development may be lagging behind that of peers.
 - May engage in emotional outbursts despite obvious ability to reason verbally
 - Struggle to interact with peers at the same emotional level if they aren't at the same intellectual level
 - Generally, the greater the level of ability, the larger will be discrepancies.
- **Perfectionism**
 - Unrealistically high standards for themselves and peers
 - Fear of failure and avoidance of challenges because they believe others expect too much of them
 - Procrastinating on projects due to feeling overwhelmed by their vision of what it should be
- **Self-esteem and identity struggles**
 - Lack of understanding their own abilities
 - Feeling different from peers
 - Feeling at odds with gender role expectations

The following are common to all children but with a higher incidence among high ability students:

- Introversions
- Peer pressure (desire to fit in is greater because they already feel different)
- Bullying (can be targets for bullies or become bullies)
- Competition
- Social skills (due to overexcitabilities and asynchronous development)
- Stress/anxiety
- Accepting others who are different
- Study habits (especially when they begin to be challenged at their true academic level after they have grown accustomed to 'coasting' because the work was easy)

Additional Resources Available

- “Guiding Students with High Abilities: Social and Emotional Considerations” is an IDOE resource available for download in a PDF in the Learning Connection and IDOE High Ability website. This resource includes the following:
 - Chart of common characteristics of high ability students and their possible negative classroom manifestations.
 - Descriptions of Common Social and Emotional Issues faced by high ability students
 - Tips for parents, teachers, and counselors of high ability students
 - Resources for addressing the social and emotional needs of high ability students
- The Indiana Association for the Gifted provides resources for high ability coordinators, parents, and teachers of high ability students (www.iag-online.org)
- The organization SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) has resources for addressing the social and emotional needs of high ability students (www.sengifted.org)

Professional Development

Introduction and Rationale

When designing professional development related to students with high ability, all facets of the program, as well as all individuals with a vested interest in the program, need to be targeted. A well thought out plan for professional development will move the district services forward.

All stakeholders will have an understanding of the following:

- The identification process that has been developed at the district level;
- The district design of student services;
- Delivery of services for students that facilitate differentiation of student instruction through grouping and collaboration;
- Student achievement data;
- Training opportunities in gifted education to maximize both teacher and student performance;
- Parental concerns about individual students; and
- The Counseling and Guidance Plan.

Program Evaluation

Introduction and Rationale

Bethel Park Elementary will continually assess our program to develop and maintain optimal cognitive, social, and emotional development for their gifted students. Districts must continually assess their programs to look for areas of strengths, challenges, and potential recommendations for improvement. To that end, the Indiana Code calls for school districts who receive a grant for high ability programming to provide an annual report to the department with results of the programs for which the grant is used, including student general assessment results, program effectiveness, or student achievement. In addition to this annual report of program effectiveness, best practice in gifted education advises that programs and services for gifted students undergo formal evaluation by outside experts in the field approximately every five years (National Association for Gifted Children, 2001).

Resources for Parents

- National Organization for the Gifted - <http://www.nagc.org/> This site offers information on national and local conventions, updates on legislation, resources for school and community groups, as well as curriculum standards for school districts.
- The National Research Center on Gifted/Talented - www.gifted.uconn.edu/NRCGT This site details findings from an ongoing longitudinal study of giftedness in children.
- Indiana Association for the Gifted - www.iag-online.org Free membership is available for parents and there are extra resources for families to use.
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted - www.sengifted.org Discusses mental health and social emotional needs for gifted students that differ from other students.

School Contact Information

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