

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

**Approved by local Board of Education on:** 06-JUN-19  
**LEA Superintendent's Name:** Tony Baldwin  
**LEA AIG Contact Name:** Christine T Cutshall  
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Buncombe County Schools has developed this local AIG plan based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBE, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018). These Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs.

The NC AIG Program Standards encompass six principle standards with accompanying practices. These standards articulate the expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs and relate to the categories related to NC's AIG legislation, Article 9B (N. C. G. S. 115C-150.5). These best practices help to clarify the standard, describe what an LEA should have in place, and guide LEAs to improve their programs.

As LEAs continue to transform their AIG Programs and align to the AIG Program Standards, LEAs participated in a self-assessment process of their local AIG program, which involved multiple stakeholders. The data gathered during this process guided LEAs in their development of this local AIG plan for 2019-2022. This local AIG plan has been approved by the LEA's board of Education and sent to NC DPI for comment.

***For 2019-2022, Buncombe County Schools local AIG plan is as follows:***

**Buncombe County Schools Vision for local AIG program:** Advanced learners in Buncombe County Schools will be challenged with academic rigor, empowered by collective advocacy, supported via collaborative systems, and engaged in problem-based critical thinking.

**Sources of funding for local AIG program (as of 2019)**

<b>State Funding</b>	<b>Local Funding</b>	<b>Grant Funding</b>	<b>Other Funding</b>
<b>\$1713901.00</b>	<b>\$186617.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>

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## Standard 1: Student Identification

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

### **Practice A**

Develops screening and referral processes that lead to AIG identification at all grade levels.

**District Response:** The Buncombe County Schools screening and referral of students is a comprehensive process developed from collaborations between the AIG Parent Advisory Committee, AIG Administrative Advisory Team, district leadership, AIG Specialists, district classroom teachers, and students. There are two initial phases that may lead to the identification of any student in BCS: (1) Mass Screening or (2) Nomination. Either of these phases may begin the AIG Evaluation Process and Timeline.

### MASS SCREENING

Buncombe County School AIG Specialists conduct an annual formal mass screening in grades 3 - 8 to establish a broad pool of students who may need differentiated services. A comprehensive screening of standardized test scores of the general student population is conducted annually in the fall. The following guidelines are used in the mass screening:

- 85%ile or above on the CogAT Screening Form (administered to all students in the 2nd semester of their 3rd grade year)
- 85%ile or above in Reading and/or Math achievement on the NC EOG or locally normed test
- 85%ile or above 115 IQ or aptitude score on a nationally normed test/screener

In addition to formal assessments, classroom teachers and/or AIG Specialists collect documentation on students demonstrating outstanding academic ability or potential. Talent Development, our nurturing program for 3rd graders who show a need for differentiation, contributes to this pool of candidates for placement as the 4th grade year begins.

AIG Specialists collect and review data from standardized tests, classroom performance, nominations (from teachers, parents, and students), and observations of student behaviors. Collaboration with classroom teachers, ESL teachers, EC teachers, and other personnel is essential to this initial search. Particular attention is given to potentially gifted students from culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged, or exceptional students during this process.

Collected data may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Copy of student's current academic grades or classroom assessments
- Scores from current achievement tests (current within one year)
- Scores from IQ/aptitude tests (current within 18 months)
- ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) scores from ESL testing
- A student's previous grades and test scores indicating a pattern of achievement
- Teacher and/or parent rating scales such as the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students

(SIGS) and the Gifted Rating Scales (GRS)

- A formal letter of recommendation from a classroom teacher supporting a child's unique needs for differentiation
- Student portfolio (Student work samples demonstrating outstanding projects, unique ways of doing assignments, outstanding academic achievement, etc.) This portfolio could be kept during 3rd grade year of Talent Development or subsequent years to be considered for AIG identification.

## NOMINATION FOR GIFTED SERVICES

Nominations may be received from AIG Specialists, teachers, parents, and self-nominating students at all grade levels. BCS standardized forms AIG-1a through AIG-1d provide clear and equitable opportunity for receiving nominations on behalf of all students. These forms are available in multiple languages and are downloadable from AIG Specialist websites and our district AIG website. Nominations must be submitted to the AIG Specialist assigned to an individual school to begin the evaluation process. Special attention should be given to students from culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged, or twice exceptional populations during the nomination process.

## PROCEDURE FOR AIG EVALUATION

The Procedure for AIG Evaluation consists of four required components:

- I. Mass Screening or Nomination for Gifted Services
- II. Student Eligibility documentation and academic assessments (as needed)
- III. School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence (SCALE) Team Evaluation and/or Administrative Placement Team (APT) Evaluation
- IV. Parent Notification

I. Mass Screening or Nomination for Gifted Services (as outlined above)

II. Before student data may be examined, parents must provide permission to evaluate via standardized form AIG-2 Notice of Nomination/Permission to Evaluate. This form is also available in multiple languages. Once this document is received, the referral timeline starts, and the AIG Specialist begins documenting student strengths and patterns of progress on AIG-3 Student AIG Eligibility Form. The AIG Specialist schedules and conducts testing, observations, and evaluations as necessary to document the student need for differentiated services.

III. Once the AIG Specialist has collected necessary data and evidences of student needs, he/she convenes the school-based School Connections for Advanced Learning (SCALE) team to review collected data for student evaluation for identification. The SCALE Team evaluates student evidences and patterns of progress in light of the BCS identification criteria and makes the determination relating to placement via the SCALE Team Identification Decision form (AIG-4).

The responsibility of the SCALE team is to ensure consistency in determining the degree to which a student demonstrates a need for differentiated services within the gifted program. Each school in the LEA has a school-based SCALE Team to govern the services and opportunities available to students on each individual campus. The SCALE Team representation shall be as follows:

## ELEMENTARY AND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS

The SCALE team consists of a school administrator or designee, the AIG Specialist, and two classroom teachers representative of the school population who are licensed or have achieved local credentials in gifted education. School counselors and curriculum specialists are invited to participate as their schedules allow.

## MIDDLE SCHOOLS

The SCALE team consists of a school administrator or designee, the AIG Specialist, and two classroom teachers who are licensed or have achieved local credentials in gifted education. SCALE team membership should also cross subject representation and grade levels in order to best represent the school community as a whole. School counselors and curriculum specialists are invited to participate as their schedules allow.

## HIGH SCHOOLS

At the high school level, the SCALE team meets on an as-needed basis. This team consists of a school administrator, the AIG Lead Facilitator, and two classroom teachers who currently teach the student being considered for identification. In the event a nomination for services in high school is made, one of the AIG Lead Facilitators will assemble the team for the identification process. School counselors and curriculum specialists are invited to participate as their schedules allow.

Should the SCALE Team be unable to make a clear determination about the degree to which a student demonstrates a need for additional differentiation, the SCALE Team may refer the case to the Administrative Placement Team (APT). The APT is a district-level committee of AIG Specialists from across our LEA who review students for identification when the school level SCALE team refers students for further consideration.

The APT is chaired by the Lead AIG Facilitators but is led by an experienced team member who documents and tracks all records of committee decisions. The committee composition reflects representation from AIG Specialists assigned to elementary, intermediate, and middle schools in various districts within our LEA. Quarterly meetings are scheduled to review students who are referred to the APT by their school-based SCALE team. The APT ensures that placement decisions are consistent and fair throughout the LEA and provides the opportunity for students' qualitative and quantitative evidences to be considered.

Since no one criterion should exclude a child from AIG identification, an AIG Specialist must submit additional documentation to the APT to provide clarity for placement decisions. The APT will either ask for more documentation or make an identification decision based on the qualitative and quantitative information provided. Identification decisions will be documented and monitored, ensuring equity and fairness across the LEA, while also giving special attention to underrepresented populations.

Additional documentation submitted to the APT may include but is not limited to:

- Student Portfolio (work samples and artifacts demonstrating excellence in reading, writing, math, or intellectual ability) kept during the 3rd grade year of Talent Development
- Teacher and/or parent rating scales such as the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) or the Gifted Ratings Scales (GRS)

- A student's previous grades and test scores indicating a pattern of achievement
- A formal letter of recommendation from a classroom teacher supporting a child's unique needs for differentiation

IV. After a determination about student identification is made, the AIG Specialist communicates the committee's decision in writing to the parents of the nominated student.

If AIG identification is recommended, the AIG Specialist hosts a parent conference where a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP, Form AIG-5a, 5b, 5c, 5d) or an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (I-DEP, Form AIG-8) is developed based upon the evidence of student need and SCALE/APT recommendations. During this conference, specialists also share the SCALE Team vision for advanced learners on the individual campus so parents are aware of available enrichment opportunities and experiences. Parents must sign the SCALE Team Decision Form (AIG-4) and give permission for the differentiated education plan as outlined in the DEP or I-DEP before students may be identified as members of the gifted program in PowerSchool and on local AIG tracking lists.

Students who are identified as Intellectually Gifted must receive an I-DEP since their needs vary greatly based on achievement data and qualitative information. Any I-DEP must be copied and submitted to the AIG Lead Facilitators to allow for district monitoring.

If AIG identification is not recommended, the AIG Specialist reviews the LEA's identification standards and the student evidences of student need via the SCALE Team Decision for Non-Identification form (AIG-10) that is sent home to parents. AIG Specialists are available to discuss placement evidences and decisions as requested by parents. The student nomination database and prior evaluation materials are maintained and shared between schools so appropriate monitoring of advanced learners is achieved.

Classroom teachers, data managers, and other appropriate school personnel are notified of the identification decision within a timely manner.

## TIMELINE FOR AIG EVALUATION

The evaluation procedure shall be completed within 50 school days of the AIG Specialist receiving parental permission to evaluate a student.

Mass screening begins in 3rd grade; however, data collected is taken into consideration for formal identification beginning in 4th grade. AIG Specialists screen throughout the 3rd grade school year, gathering data and anecdotal information to assist in identification within the first weeks of 4th grade. Every effort is made to identify students who show a clear and present need for AIG services within the first two full weeks of 4th grade.

The evaluation window for all BCS students is generally within the first three months of the school year; however, any time a student shows a need for AIG services, a nomination will be accepted. Except in unusual circumstances, nominations must be made six weeks before End-of-Grade or End-of-Course testing begins to assure that evaluations are appropriately diagnostic while causing minimal interruption to a student's additional assessment responsibilities. Primary grade students may

be nominated throughout the year if there is an extreme need for differentiation and/or a case for grade acceleration.

### **Practice B**

Establishes a process and criteria for AIG student identification at all grade levels that provides multiple opportunities to reveal a student's aptitude, achievement, or potential to achieve. The criteria may include both qualitative and quantitative data in order to develop a comprehensive learner profile.

**District Response:** Buncombe County Schools utilizes multiple qualitative and quantitative criteria for AIG student identification in grades K-12 to ensure that student strengths remain the focus. Once information is gathered, two levels of review are available: a school-based School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence Team (SCALE) and a county-wide Administrative Placement Team (APT). Appendix A is a graphic representation of the varied Buncombe County Schools Identification areas.

## IDENTIFICATION GRADES K-3

Primary students may be identified as gifted in grades K-3 in Buncombe County if there is a body of evidence that indicates a need. The primary student should demonstrate an extreme need for differentiation before being considered for identification.

Primary students must meet the minimum requirements in all the following:

- Demonstrated extreme need for differentiation as documented through Problem Solver nurturing program activities and regular classroom performance
- 96%ile or above on a nationally normed IQ/aptitude test administered by a licensed psychologist
- 98%ile or above in achievement for reading and/or math on a nationally normed test administered by a licensed psychologist
- Work samples demonstrating mastery in reading and math
- Teacher recommendation

If the school-based SCALE team determines that the student does demonstrate an extreme need for differentiation, the student will be identified as AG (Academically Gifted). An Individualized Differentiation Plan (I-DEP) will be developed by the student's AIG Specialist, classroom teacher(s), and parents. Any I-DEP must be copied and submitted to the AIG Lead Facilitators for district monitoring.

If the K-3 student does not meet all the above criteria, the SCALE team may refer the student to the Buncombe County Schools APT for further review or may delay placement until further information is gathered to show the need for identification.

## IDENTIFICATION GRADES 4-8

Students may be identified as gifted in Buncombe County in one of the following areas:

### Intellectually Gifted (IG)

Aptitude/IQ of 97th percentile or higher on a nationally normed IQ/aptitude test within the last 18 months. If the IQ test was administered by a licensed psychologist when the student was at least 8 years old, the student's IQ score is reliable and may be used indefinitely. This identification area is considered when achievement scores do not meet criteria for AIG.

### Academically Gifted in Reading (AR)

Students must meet the minimum requirements in all the following:

- Aptitude of 120/90th percentile on a nationally normed IQ/aptitude test within 18 months on a nationally normed IQ/aptitude test within 18 months. If the IQ test was administered by a licensed psychologist when the student was at least 8 years old, the student's IQ score is considered reliable and may be used indefinitely.
- 93rd percentile or higher in reading on either the NC EOG test or another nationally normed achievement test within 12 months
- Grade of A or B in reading (the most recently completed semester or year)
- Teacher recommendation

### Academically Gifted in Math (AM)

Students must meet the minimum requirements in all the following:

- Aptitude of 120/90th percentile on a nationally normed IQ/aptitude test within 18 months. If the IQ test was administered by a licensed psychologist when the student was at least 8 years old, the student's IQ score is considered reliable and may be used indefinitely.
- 93rd percentile or higher in mathematics on either the NC EOG test or another nationally normed achievement test within 12 months
- Grade of A or B in math (the most recently completed semester or year)
- Teacher recommendation

### Academically Gifted in Reading and Math (AG)

Students must meet the minimum requirements in all the following:

- Aptitude of 120/90th percentile on a nationally normed IQ/aptitude test within 18 months. If the IQ test was administered by a licensed psychologist when the student was at least 8 years old, the student's IQ score is considered reliable and may be used indefinitely.
- 93rd percentile or higher achievement in reading and/or math on either the NC EOG tests or other nationally normed achievement tests within 12 months. If one score is used to place, then it is recommended that the other score be at the 75th percentile or higher to be identified in both reading and math. It is recommended that students in Grades 3 and 4 be



identified as AG due to the lack of historical test data to support identification in only one area.

- Grades of A or B in reading and math (the most recently completed semester or year)
- Teacher recommendation

### Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG)

Students must meet the minimum requirements in all the following:

- Aptitude of 130/97th percentile on a nationally normed IQ/aptitude test within 18 months. If the IQ test was administered by a licensed psychologist when the student was at least 8 years old, the student's IQ score is considered reliable and may be used indefinitely.
- 95th percentile or higher achievement in reading and/or math on either the NC EOG tests or another nationally normed achievement test within 12 months. If one score is used to place, then it is recommended that the other score be at the 90th percentile or higher to be identified in both reading and math.
- Grades of A in reading and math (the most recently completed semester or year)
- Teacher recommendation

Students who meet all the criteria within an area may be identified by the school-based SCALE team and referral procedures are followed. If the school-based SCALE team determines there is an extreme need for differentiation, an individualized differentiated education plan (I-DEP) may be developed. Students who are identified as Intellectually Gifted (IG) must receive an I-DEP since their needs vary greatly based on achievement data and qualitative information. Every I-DEP must be copied and submitted to the AIG Lead Facilitators to allow for district monitoring.

### IDENTIFICATION GRADES 9-12

High school students may be identified as gifted in Buncombe County if there is a body of evidence that indicates a need. The high school student should demonstrate an extreme need for differentiation that is unable to be met via the multiple pathways for differentiated success that are available at the high school level.

Nominations for student identification (grades 9-12) should be submitted to the AIG Lead Facilitator. Nominations may be received from teachers, parents, or self-nominating students. The AIG Lead Facilitator is responsible for completing the referral process as outlined in Practice A.

### GRADE ACCELERATION - GRADES K-8

A student may be considered for grade acceleration/double promotion based on the criteria below:

- 99th percentile on an individual aptitude test administered by a licensed psychologist
- 99th percentile achievement in reading or math on a nationally normed test
- Score on Iowa Acceleration Scale indicating a need for acceleration
- Teacher recommendation

- Parent approval
- Principal approval

Once a student is being considered for grade acceleration, a team will be formed to gather information and make a decision. This team is led by the principal and should have the following members: AIG Specialist, current grade-level classroom teacher, future grade-level classroom teacher representative, and the parents. While the SCALE Team is not part of this process, they may be consulted for recommendations. The AIG Specialist must submit a recommendation to the team based on the criteria established and evidence-based practices; however, the principal will make the final decision about grade acceleration.

### AIG TRANSFERS

Gifted students who are currently identified as AIG in any North Carolina public Local Education Agency with a NC state Gifted Services Plan will maintain their previous AIG identification when transferring into Buncombe County Schools. However, current student performance and assessment data must be reviewed to determine the most appropriate services. A Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) will be created and will govern the services that are available to the student in Buncombe County. The DEP will match the student's demonstrated needs and BCS service delivery options.

Transfer students identified as gifted in other US states or from private and charter schools with no approved NC AIG Plan must complete the Procedure for AIG Evaluation and meet Buncombe County Schools AIG identification criteria.

### **Practice C**

Ensures AIG screening, referral, and identification procedures respond to under-represented populations of the gifted and are responsive to LEA demographics. These populations include students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

**District Response:** Particular attention is given to potentially gifted students from ethnically/culturally diverse, English language learners, economically disadvantaged, or twice-exceptional populations. To ensure that our procedures are appropriately sensitive and responsive to underrepresented populations, Buncombe County Schools:

- Conducts an annual formal mass screening in grades 3-8 in order to establish a broad-based pool of students who may demonstrate a need for differentiated services. We screen all students who score greater than or equal to 85%ile or above on standardized state testing.
- Employs a county-wide third grade screening program that occurs during the second semester of third grade. All third graders, regardless of previous testing or demonstrated ability, are administered the Cognitive Abilities Test - Screening Form in order to create an equitable, county-wide screening pool.

- Allows for additional screening data from student portfolios that may include tests, classroom performance, nominations from teachers, parents, students, and observations of student behaviors.
- Requires professional development to achieve local credentials in gifted education that includes purposeful instruction in the unique needs and characteristics of this population. Specific charts, tables, and checklists to support a teacher's ability to recognize special population gifted students are shared from our support text *Special Populations in Gifted Education: Understanding Our Most Able Students from Diverse Backgrounds* by Jaime Castellano and Andrea Dawn Frazier.
- Supports classroom teachers in designing situations and learning experiences for students where gifted behaviors may emerge.
- Utilizes assessment instruments that minimize language and/or experience barriers. The TONI-4 and the Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities tests are evaluations of aptitude that do not require mastery of the English language and take into consideration a student's potential limited background knowledge via non-verbal administration.
- Conducts annual school-based reviews and professional development, including a focus on atypical gifted learners, to ensure teachers understand the identification and referral processes.
- Extends nurturing into 3rd grade via our program called Talent Development. This pool of students does not have to qualify for AIG services and are served based on student strengths. EC, ELL, Title 1 and school counselors are consulted to determine a need for service through this talent development. Talent Development groups are fluid and flexible, allowing for diversity of students being monitored.
- Provides AIG information at Kindergarten registration and Kindergarten Open Houses to inform all parents of programming opportunities.
- Collaborates with BCS Language Services Department to secure interpreter services for parent conferences and meetings and to translate communications and official forms into major languages to ensure equitable communication and understanding among represented language groups.
- Promotes the use of the Administrative Placement Team (APT) to consider identification cases where unique factors may be reflected in student patterns of progress or data record. When appropriate, the APT team may invite relevant personnel to assist in the decision-making process (i.e. ESL Coach, EC Coach, Student Services staff, etc.).

#### **Practice D**

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

**District Response:** A formal screening, nomination, and identification procedure is necessary to ensure consistency throughout Buncombe County Schools. All schools have designated a School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence (SCALE) Team to ensure consistency in the assessment and placement portion of the process. Additionally, the consistency of screening,

referral, and identification processes within the LEA is ensured in the following ways:

- Lead AIG Facilitators lead and implement monthly PLC meetings with AIG Specialists to increase consistency in expectations.
- During monthly PLC meetings, AIG Specialists are updated on screening, referral, and identification processes. This mutual collaboration time is essential to the equity in identification processes across the district.
- AIG Specialists chair the SCALE Teams in schools to which they are assigned. AIG Specialists design SCALE Team updates, agendas, and activities during monthly PLC meetings to ensure consistency across the district.
- Compliance and completion of procedures are documented in our AIG Evidence Notebooks, data records, and in student AIG folders. In addition to PowerSchool, students who are identified are added to school spreadsheets; those who are referred but not identified are added to our Nomination Database and their academic progress is monitored. Each student record of evaluation is maintained and the evaluation information transitions between schools as students advance. Additional documentation is included in our AIG Evidence Notebooks that are reviewed and internally audited yearly for compliance.
- New AIG Specialists receive training from the Lead AIG Facilitators to ensure consistent implementation, and every new AIG Specialist is assigned a mentor to answer questions and provide guidance.
- A standardized digital presentation of our AIG Plan, including screening, referral and identification processes, is shared with all AIG specialists and is used in school professional development meetings and SCALE Team meetings.
- Records of screening, referral, and identification processes are kept at each school. Internal auditing occurs at the end of each school year, as AIG Specialists review records of other schools to ensure accuracy. Records moving to the next school in a transition (i.e. elementary to middle school) are also audited by the AIG Specialist in the receiving school.

### **Practice E**

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

**District Response:** It is important that screening, referral, and identification processes be clear and equitable across the district. For that reason, those policies must be easily available to school personnel, parents/ families, students, and the community-at-large. Digital and/or print copies of the current BCS AIG Plan may be obtained by any interested person(s) via contact with any school-based AIG Specialist or the Lead AIG Facilitators at the district Central Office.

A digital copy of the Buncombe County Schools AIG Plan may be downloaded from the BCS

Curriculum and Instruction Department webpage or from any individual AIG Specialist's school-based webpage. Additionally, the AIG district webpage contains links to individual AIG Specialist's webpages, AIG Curricular Goals, the Procedure for AIG Evaluation, and Frequently Asked Questions about the screening, nomination, and identification processes for all grade levels. Information on the link is available in English, Spanish, and Russian.

Because the AIG Plan is easily available and accessible, AIG Specialists use the plan language in regular communications and share it at meetings with parents. This provides a familiarity with our plan and increases parental understandings of expectations and practices. AIG identification processes will be included on 3rd grade parent letter for CogAT screening notifications. In 2019-2020, a county-wide statement will be released to all stakeholders addressing the move of identification from 3rd grade to 4th grade in the new plan cycle. Particular attention will be given to 2nd grade parents as their students move to 3rd grade and formal screening and referral processes begin.

The AIG Plan is also shared annually with school personnel at staff meetings to ensure that all school-based personnel understand the collective responsibility for equitable identification practices. School-based AIG Specialists provide yearly professional development as needed in other faculty meetings or PLC meetings to update staff on the AIG plan and the needs of special populations represented on each campus.

A district-wide AIG brochure is distributed at BCS Countdown to Kindergarten as well as school-based Kindergarten registrations. This brochure is available online and in the offices of each school and throughout every grade level in Buncombe County Schools.

### **Practice F**

Documents a student's AIG identification process and evidence which leads to an identification decision. This documentation is reviewed with parents/families and maintained in student records.

**District Response:** Careful documentation is kept throughout the screening and referral process. Once an AIG Specialist has received a formal nomination for evaluation, the following documents are gathered and kept to indicate a full body of evidence to be considered for the purpose of identification:

- Nomination for Gifted Services (Form AIG - 1a, 1b, 1c, or 1d)
- Notice of Nomination/Parent Permission to Evaluate (Form AIG - 2)
- Student AIG Eligibility Form (AIG - 3; testing protocols are NOT included but summary sheets are attached as available)
- SCALE Team Decision Form (Form AIG - 4; must include parental permission for service if identified); APT Decision Form, if available
- Differentiated Education Plan (Form AIG-5a, 5b, 5c, or 5d) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (Form AIG-8)
- Any other pertinent documentation (Gifted Rating Scale, ELL Access testing scores, anecdotal records, teacher letters, etc.)

If AIG placement is recommended, the AIG Specialist creates an AIG student folder containing all relevant identification documents for the student; this AIG student folder is kept on file at the school to which the identified student is assigned and transitions with the student between schools in Buncombe County. This AIG student folder is reviewed with parents during initial placement conferences and other subsequent conferences.

If AIG placement is not recommended, the AIG Specialist maintains the record of the evaluation in a Non-Placement folder. This record of students who have been evaluated but did not show a need for additional differentiated instruction also transitions with students between schools in Buncombe County. These non-placement records are essential to consider in future student evaluations to make certain that the most appropriate testing options and student performance data are considered. The goal of every AIG evaluation is to get the best possible picture of a student's needs and ensure that every student is challenged in the most rigorous setting possible. To that end, all data and evaluations are critical to be considered as a snapshot of student needs at any given time in the educational journey.

#### **Ideas for Strengthen the Standard:**

- Strengthening and monitoring of 3rd grade Talent Development grouping and curriculum.
- Clear and consistent delivery of changes in identification practices to all stakeholders.
- Monitor and analyze impacts of identification timeline on underrepresented populations.

#### **Sources of Evidence:**

Each AIG Specialist maintains an Evidence Notebook at each school that catalogs school-based documentation in order to assure consistency of AIG plan operations. Documents related to Standard 1 and its practices are kept in this notebook.

Documentation includes, but is not limited to:

- District and school websites
- Agendas from presentations at faculty meetings, parent meetings, school board meetings, and AIG advisory meetings
- Student AIG folders
- Non-identification/placement records
- School-based School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence (SCALE) records (Record of Decision Making)
- Buncombe County Schools Administrative Placement Team (ATP) records
- Talent Development participation records
- Problem Solver participation records
- AIG Headcount

- Screening Pool lists
- Database of Nominated Students
- Agendas for monthly AIG PLC meetings
- Classroom Differentiation Documentation forms
- Lists of AIG licensed or locally credentialed teachers within the school

## **Standard 2: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community**

The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

### **Practice A**

Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the needs of gifted learners across all grade levels and learning environments. These services are aligned to a student's AIG identification.

**District Response:** Buncombe County Schools delivers services to gifted students based on a philosophy that defines gifted education as a design of many options and alternatives that vary in kind, degree, and duration for many different students (Treffinger, 1989). Our program is designed to provide services that range from developing gifted potential to addressing the needs of students who demonstrate advanced skills and abilities. This includes the talent development of potential student placements and the collaboration of school support personnel to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, and appropriate support staff (e.g. school counselors and social workers, EC and ELL teachers) collaborate to deliver comprehensive services for gifted students through appropriate learning environments, content differentiation, and special programs. These different learning environments permit AIG Specialists and classroom teachers to deliver services through flexible clustering and pacing options. AIG Specialists and classroom teachers also work together to differentiate content, processes of learning, and product choices for gifted students through enrichment, extension, and/or compacting of the regular curriculum.

### **NURTURING AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS GRADES K-3**

The AIG Department provides early primary enrichment to classroom teachers and students with the intention of cultivating potential in every K-3 student.

#### **Kindergarten**

Kindergarten services are consultative. AIG Specialists attend Buncombe County Schools' Kindergarten Open House to share information regarding K-12 AIG programs, services, and research. AIG Specialists are available to attend PLCs in schools and/or provide differentiation strategies or professional development as needed. We have a Kindergarten Task Force of AIG Specialists who gather and share research, differentiation strategies, book lists, activities and enrichment opportunities with teachers and parents of advanced Kindergarten students.

#### **First grade- Problem Solvers**

First grade students receive both direct and indirect services. During the first quarter, the AIG Specialist observes first graders in the regular classroom; then the AIG Specialist and classroom



teacher will nominate students for the Problem Solvers Program. At the beginning of the second quarter, first graders work directly with the AIG Specialists for a minimum of 30 consecutive minutes every two weeks. Participation in Problem Solvers is flexible and fluid based on teacher recommendations of student need.

AIG Specialists communicate, consult, and collaborate with teachers, providing additional indirect services for these advanced learners. Additionally, AIG Specialists and teachers regularly review summative assessments, formative assessments, benchmark assessments, and/or universal screening assessments to identify students who are performing well above grade level or who are considered advanced within their local school norms.

### Second grade- Problem Solvers

Second grade students also receive direct and indirect services. Second graders participate in Problem Solvers for a minimum of 30 minutes weekly. Teachers use a standardized checklist of gifted behaviors to recommend students for participation; AIG Specialists collaborate with teachers to ensure that students from special populations are recognized and included.

Additionally, AIG Specialists and teachers regularly review summative assessments, formative assessments, benchmark assessments, and/or universal screening assessments to identify students who are performing well above grade level or who are considered advanced within their local school norms. Consultative service through collaboration between the AIG Specialist and the classroom teacher provides additional support to these advanced learners. Participation in Problem Solvers is flexible and fluid based on teacher recommendations of student need.

### Third grade - Talent Development

Because third graders experience a large amount of standardized evaluations due to state requirements, an additional year of developing talent is implemented to both minimize student stress and strengthen the body of evidence required for AIG identification. Also, talent will be developed another year in our special populations of advanced learners, laying the groundwork for future AIG identification in those populations. Our advisory groups and AIG Specialists supported the creation of our Talent Development program in 3rd grade that would allow a greater number of students to receive talent development services before formal evaluation for identification in 4th grade.

Therefore, third grade students receive direct and indirect services from the AIG Specialist. Students receive enrichment through the Talent Development Program for a minimum of 45 consecutive minutes weekly. Students can be recommended for Talent Development groups by their teachers at the end of the 2nd grade year and/or by their 3rd grade teachers throughout the school year. A variety of data will be used for these recommendations.

AIG Specialists and teachers regularly review summative assessments, formative assessments, benchmark assessments, universal screening assessments, Reading-Beginning of Grade Test, and/or End of Grade (EOG) Tests to identify students who are performing well above grade level. In addition to Talent Development pull out groups, consultative service through collaboration between the AIG Specialist and the classroom teacher may be provided for all advanced learners.

## ELEMENTARY, INTERMEDIATE, AND MIDDLE SCHOOL CORE SERVICES -

It is imperative that gifted learners are provided programs and services that reflect equity and excellence and are an integral part of the comprehensive instructional program. Gifted learners require challenging, differentiated curriculum and instruction; yet, their curriculum must evolve from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. This requires the development of curriculum, programs, and services that connect to the NC SCOS but meet gifted students' academic and intellectual needs.

Instructional programs in Buncombe County Schools are driven by the implementation of research-based service delivery models. Approximately 80% of stakeholders in Buncombe County Schools state that AIG services through the pull-out enrichment program are a significant part of the gifted students' school experience. Cluster numbers and processes are based on best practices and feedback from teachers and administrators on district surveys that indicate over 86% agree that cluster grouping of gifted students helps meet academic needs.

## REQUIRED CORE SERVICES - GRADES 4, 5, AND 6

Cluster grouping ensures that a rigorous and differentiated reading and math classroom experience is provided for gifted students; core classroom instruction for this group includes advanced content and is delivered at a challenging pace to meet the needs of advanced learners. Cluster grouped sections are led by the regular classroom teacher who holds BCS Local Credentials for Gifted Education or North Carolina licensure in Gifted Education. Cluster groups shall contain a minimum of 5 identified AIG students, though a minimum of 8 students is highly recommended. School size may dictate clustering, but every effort should be made to form clusters adhering to the recommendation. Intellectually Gifted (IG) students are clustered based on the strengths and needs identified in their I-DEP. Every effort is made to cluster advanced learners in 4th grade as determined by participation in Talent Development in 3rd grade, principal/AIG Specialist collaboration, and formative test data.

Gifted students shall receive explicit and direct instruction from the AIG Specialist in a separate setting for a minimum of 45 to 60 consecutive minutes per week for the purpose of enrichment and continued extension of NCSCOS standards. The AIG Curriculum Goals and AIG Curriculum Map located in Standard 3 define services during this time. Because activities, instruction, and thinking tasks are often well above grade level during this time, AIG students are not required to complete classroom assignments missed while receiving AIG services.

## REQUIRED CORE SERVICES - GRADES 7 AND 8

Cluster grouping ensures that a rigorous and differentiated reading and math classroom experience is provided for gifted students; core classroom instruction for this group includes advanced content and is delivered at a challenging pace to meet the needs of advanced learners. Cluster grouped sections are led by regular classroom teachers who hold BCS Local Credentials for Gifted Education or North Carolina licensure in Gifted Education.

Cluster groups shall contain a minimum of 8 identified AIG students. School size may dictate clustering, but every effort should be made to form clusters adhering to the recommendation. Intellectually gifted (IG) students are clustered based on the strengths and needs identified in their I-

DEP. Identified students are clustered with other high achieving students for instruction in Math and English/Language Arts. "High achieving" is defined as students who have scored at a high Level IV or above on the previous year's NC EOG tests. It is strongly recommended that gifted students also be clustered in other content areas, as appropriate. Best practices support providing advanced programming across all content areas.

Gifted students shall receive explicit and direct instruction from the AIG Specialist in a separate setting for a minimum of 45 to 60 consecutive minutes per week for the purpose of enrichment and continued extension of NCSCOS standards. The AIG Curriculum Goals and AIG Curriculum Map located in Standard 3 define services during this time. Because activities, instruction, and thinking tasks are often well above grade level during this time, AIG students are not required to complete classroom assignments missed while receiving AIG services.

#### VARIATIONS OF REQUIRED CORE SERVICES - GRADES 4 - 8

Any variation from the Gifted Services Plan regarding the required core service delivery model must be submitted in writing and approved by the AIG Lead Facilitator, Director of Elementary and Intermediate Schools and/or Director of Middle Schools, and Associate Superintendent for Curriculum. Parents must be notified of approved variations to these required services in writing as changes may impact a student's ability to receive services effectively.

#### OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS OF CORE SERVICES - GRADES 4 - 8

Extensions of Core Services are available to students in AIG cluster classrooms based on time, personnel, and student need:

- The AIG Specialist may serve students by co-teaching or assisting the regular classroom teacher with differentiating/planning instructional units.
- The AIG Specialist may provide additional small group instruction to meet the unique instructional and social-emotional needs of gifted students.
- The AIG Specialist may offer additional advisement in group or individual settings. The emphasis may include study skills, time management, or organizational skills. Extracurricular activities that extend the classroom experience may also be offered.

#### REQUIRED CORE SERVICES - GRADES 9 - 12

Buncombe County Schools supports the philosophy of student choice at the high school level and encourages gifted students to pursue specifically differentiated academic options for services, including but not limited to: Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS), College and Career Promise (CCP) dual enrollment, Buncombe Virtual Online Academy (BVOA), Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM), Cooperative/Innovative High School (CIHS) choices, and other options tailored to meet individual needs. Buncombe County currently is home to three CIHS options - Nesbitt Discovery Academy, BCS Early College, and BCS Middle College.

A system of support at each high school including counselors, Career Development Coordinators, social workers, graduation initiative specialists, parents, and school-based mentors assist AIG

students in developing an understanding of personal skills, talents, interests, and strengths that will be useful in creating short-term goals, long-range plans for course selections, and post-graduation or career plans. Middle school AIG Specialists continue to provide consultative services for high school students as they access these various options. Currently, BCS is in contract negotiations with digital college and career planning platforms that can further enhance this work and provide a framework for individualized support.

### **Practice B**

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

**District Response:** A rigorous and differentiated curriculum is the bedrock of instructional programming in BCS and is the structure for all Tier 1 MTSS service for learners. AIG Specialists are an integral part of that service as they collaborate with BCS locally credentialed teachers to assist with differentiation resources, planning instructional units, and additional services for cluster grouped students. This partnership also provides information on differentiated services and enrichment opportunities to guardians and parents. AIG Specialists and AIG cluster teachers consider the growth of all subgroups of student populations during PLC meetings. Pre-tests, formative assessments, and summative assessments provide documentation of individual student needs and effective strategies to meet them.

During the specialized services for advanced learners, Buncombe County Schools' AIG staff implements curriculum units that are connected to the total instructional 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 is developmentally appropriate and will engage them in the classroom and prepare them for their future. That challenging, differentiated curriculum must be aligned with standards for each grade, as standards are set forth by the state and need to be deepened and broadened as student ability and readiness allows.

The AIG Lead Facilitators collaborate with the curriculum staff to ensure alignment of AIG curriculum with the NCSCOS. To facilitate this collaboration, the AIG Lead Facilitators serve under the auspices of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. AIG Lead Facilitators and AIG Specialists participate in curriculum activities, committee meetings, and professional development across all departments (i.e. Science, Math, ELA, STEM, EC, student services, ESL, counseling, etc.). AIG Lead Facilitators also attend curriculum meetings at the district level every two weeks throughout the school year.

Approximately 96% of parents surveyed reported that AIG services are essential to the overall instructional program of the school. Approximately 89% of administrators reported that Buncombe County Schools adapts the NCSCOS to address a range of advanced ability levels in Language Arts, Math, and other content areas. These survey responses provide rationale for our strong connection between AIG services, curriculum, and the total instructional program of our LEA.

### **Practice C**

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

**District Response:** Buncombe County Schools believes that assessments of learning, assessments for learning, and assessments as learning are all critical components of a well-structured, responsive learning environment where intentional, flexible grouping is practiced. As Tomlinson, Moon, and Imbeau assert in *Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom*:

"Pre-assessments and formative assessments are often described as assessments for learning - that is, they help the teacher plan for better focused or more targeted instruction than would likely occur without the information about student learning the assessments reveal. Formative assessments are also opportunities to use assessment as learning, particularly when students are active participants in analyzing assessment results in order to create a basis for planning and supporting their own academic growth. When assessment becomes a regular part of the learning process, students become increasingly skilled at focusing on key learning targets, reflecting on their own work in regard to those targets, setting goals and timelines for their learning, and providing meaningful feedback to on another."

The BCS Instructional Framework for all contents and all grade levels requires all teachers to utilize standards-based purposes, daily learning targets, daily formative assessments, and agendas to enhance student learning in every classroom. These daily formative assessments provide the groundwork for matching student proficiencies to flexible grouping practices based on measures such as readiness, interest, and learner profiles. While cluster grouping addresses the advanced learner's need for time with others who are similar to themselves in order to facilitate their academic, intellectual, social, and emotional growth, flexible grouping provides a fluid response to particular skill and practice needs that facilitate further growth.

Talent Development takes all advanced learners' needs into account as varied formative and summative assessments are used to make participation decisions. At the end of 2nd grade, teachers can make recommendations for students to participate in Talent Development groups. These groups are flexible, as recommendations can continue to be made throughout the 3rd grade year and as advanced learners' talents emerge.

Consistent Professional Learning Community (PLC) work allows educators to build these daily formative assessments into practice and to create structures for flexible grouping to exist. Working in these flexible groups across interests, abilities, achievement, and grade levels allows all students to grow in their background knowledge, communication, and collaboration skills all while deepening understanding of content across the curriculum.

### **Practice D**

Informs all teachers, school administrators, and support staff about delivery of differentiated services and instruction for AIG students, regulations related to gifted education, and the local AIG program and plan.

**District Response:** The architecture of the Buncombe County Schools' Gifted Services Plan is such

that our LEA resources, community demographics and expectations, student and parent needs, and exemplary educator practices are tightly woven around state standards and practices to reflect our district's unique plan to support and challenge advanced learners. Parents, students, teachers, administrators, AIG Specialists, and other curriculum specialists collaborate to identify needs, craft creative and responsive solutions, implement those solutions with fidelity, and provide reflection on the effectiveness of such practices. Careful and clear communication is essential to our plan's fidelity across the district and for all stakeholder groups.

Thus, BCS Board of Education approves the BCS AIG Plan at the beginning of each new plan cycle. Upon approval, Lead AIG Facilitators create a county-wide digital presentation that is used to clarify updates, policy changes, and other pertinent information in the 2019-2022 plan. Lead AIG Facilitators work with AIG Specialists to review this digital presentation and the new plan so communications with other stakeholders are consistent. Lead Facilitators and AIG Specialists update school and district webpages to include approved plan information, Frequently Asked Questions sections, and updated contact information. District and school brochures and approved standardized forms are also updated. A new AIG Handbook is created to reflect district changes and includes these new documents.

The 2019-2022 AIG Plan digital presentation is shared annually at each school by that building's assigned AIG Specialist. Having a uniform presentation ensures the consistency of information to all stakeholders and clarifies our shared responsibility for advanced learner growth. Lead AIG Facilitators attend district level principals' meetings to present the updates to AIG programming, gain feedback, and inform administrators about best practices in gifted education. Strategies for effective differentiated instruction are also shared at PLC meetings at the school-level with classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, and administrators as needed throughout the school year. NCDPI AIG Booster Shots are available on our Buncombe County Schools Canvas page and can be shared by AIG Specialists at PLC meetings at the schools.

The Buncombe County Schools' AIG Local Credentials Institute (LCI) is a professional development opportunity designed to train and support all educators who work with gifted students. The LCI occurs twice annually and is provided free of charge. Classroom teachers are required to earn local credentials before leading clusters of identified students; however, all teachers are encouraged to enroll in the professional development. Educators who participate in the LCI will:

- Understand the current Buncombe County Schools AIG Plan and the shared levels of responsibility in meeting the needs of gifted learners within our county.
- Recognize gifted learners and understand their unique educational and social-emotional needs.
- Learn research-based methodologies to differentiate the NCSCOS in daily instruction.
- Collaborate with AIG specialists to adapt units of study for advanced learners.
- Teach and reflect upon a differentiated lesson in collaboration with an AIG Specialist.

Gifted students have specific needs requiring teachers, counselors, and administrators who have the necessary knowledge and understandings to be involved in their education. Receiving relevant information enables teachers, school administrators, and support staff to fulfill their role in the AIG student's overall educational program. With the combination of the Buncombe County Schools' website and the dissemination of information through AIG Specialists, 85% of elementary and middle

school teachers state that Buncombe County Schools informs all personnel about the delivery of differentiated services and instruction for gifted students, regulations related to gifted education, and the local AIG program and plan.

### **Practice E**

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

**District Response:** Transitions often heighten anxieties and highlight asynchrony in and between the cognitive, emotional, and physical development of gifted individuals (National Association for Gifted Children NAGC, 2019). For that reason, Buncombe County Schools intends to be proactive in planning transition experiences that:

- create parental and student awareness of any expected AIG service delivery changes,
- highlight the unique enrichment and extension opportunities available at each school, and
- respond to parental and student need for connection and belonging.

AIG Specialists are required to host a minimum of two annual meetings to support transitions; these meetings must include standardized service delivery expectations but should also be personalized to fit the needs of the individual school and its population. Meeting agendas and sign in sheets of attendees should be maintained in the AIG Evidence Notebook. Collaborations with administrators, counselors, and other specialists are encouraged so these meetings are useful and comprehensive. Lead AIG Facilitators are available to attend transition meetings as schedules allow.

Specialists are also required to visit "feeder schools" to meet incoming students, share information about service options, and make connections with learners.

For years that require building transitions, AIG Specialists complete Differentiated Education Plans (DEP) for students that are based upon the service delivery options available to new grade levels and campuses. These new DEPs are shared with parents and students during annual meetings. The effective transition of student information is essential to the integrity of the AIG Program and its documentation. Student AIG folders are housed in each school and provide historical data about AIG services, student performance, and previous service delivery options. These AIG folders follow student transitions and are managed by a student's current AIG Specialist. Middle school AIG Specialists manage AIG folders for identified high school students.

### **Practice F**

Addresses the social and emotional needs of AIG students through collaboration among school counseling personnel, regular education teachers, AIG specialists, and others.

**District Response:** We believe that social and emotional needs are at the heart of well-being and the foundation for achievement for all children. The Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework provides a comprehensive approach to evaluating, identifying, targeting, and supporting student

needs in both academic and emotional areas. Despite the myth that gifted students are somehow buffered from issues in these areas, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) reminds us that "many gifted children need targeted assistance with peer relationships, perfectionism, asynchronous development, situational stressors, and post-secondary planning" in order to succeed.

Buncombe County Schools addresses the social emotional needs of gifted learners by providing a structure that funnels support from the district level to the individual student; Appendix B illustrates this work. MTSS cohort training will ensure that all BCS schools are using consistent language, providing evidence-based strategies, and using integrated plans that address students' academic, behavioral, social and emotional needs.

Our district AIG Specialist PLC meetings provide a specific collaborative setting for considering the various needs of our advanced learning population. Central Office instructional staff are regularly invited to present information on current trends, strategies, and best practices in their respective disciplines. This includes but is not limited to: Student Support teams, Exceptional Children leaders, subject specific specialists, and school counselors. This regular opportunity for collaboration at the district level allows all personnel to share information and problem solve issues around supporting the holistic development of gifted learners.

Each AIG Specialist chairs the School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence Team (SCALE) at his/her assigned schools. This team governs and steers the supports for all advanced learners at each school. SCALE Teams:

- Make decisions about AIG identification cases
- Govern advanced learning initiatives
- Ensure campus-wide enrichment opportunities for students
- Advocate for needs of all high achievers
- Build capacity for clear communication between stakeholders
- Track growth data of advanced learning subgroups
- Advise district AIG PLC about student needs
- Combat advanced student withdrawals
- Monitor transition plans for advanced students between district schools
- Support school-level professional development for differentiation
- Participate in school self-assessments for advanced learning programs offered

Members of the SCALE Team work collaboratively with grade level PLC groups to share information and strategies available for advanced learner supports. In accordance with Differentiated Education Plan service options, AIG Specialists continue to provide targeted lessons, specific consultative support, and interventions to meet the needs of individual students and families. This teamwork and structure assure that needs are comprehensively addressed and proactively supported.

To document this essential, comprehensive collaboration, AIG Specialists detail the various ways they provide support and facilitate collaboration by maintaining yearly Evidence Notebooks. Meeting agendas, parent conference documentation, DEPs, lesson plans, emails, and other formal and informal sources of communication authenticate the collaborative partnerships between the AIG Specialist and other stakeholders, including classroom teachers, content specialists, counselors,



parents, and administrators. The collaboration specific to social and emotional needs is documented alongside other collaboration evidence.

### **Practice G**

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

**District Response:** Buncombe County Schools Board Policies Series 3000 governs the educational programming of our district. BCS offers many opportunities for acceleration that include digital, hybrid, and face-to-face options to match student needs. Although substantial differentiation is provided through AIG services and classroom strategies, there may be a body of evidence that indicates a need for compacted content, grade acceleration, or Credit by Demonstrated Mastery. For that reason, Buncombe County Schools provides options that allow for acceleration.

We offer early entrance to Kindergarten for children "who demonstrate an extraordinary level of academic ability and maturity" (BCS Board Policy 4100-R). At the middle school level, students may earn high school credit on their school campus through NC Virtual Public High School (NCVPS) or through Buncombe Virtual Options Academy (BVOA). At the high school level, there are opportunities for advancement and acceleration through hybrid courses with the NC School of Science and Math, AP courses, Career and College Promise dual-enrollment with IHEs, NCVPS, BVOA, and Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM).

### **EARLY ENTRANCE TO KINDERGARTEN**

Buncombe County Schools School Board Policy 4100-R provides opportunities for young, precocious children to enter Kindergarten early. Because entering Kindergarten a year early is interpreted by the board as the equivalent of whole grade acceleration, several considerations are made, including assessment data. The assessment data and other information must present a body of evidence that the child is "precocious in academic and social development." Once a request is made for students to gain early entrance, the principal at the school to be attended convenes a committee of educational professionals who will assist him/her in making decisions about each individual child. (See Appendix C)

### **GRADE ACCELERATION/DOUBLE PROMOTION - GRADES K-8**

A student may be considered for grade acceleration/double promotion in grades K-8 based on the criteria below:

- \* 99th percentile on an individual aptitude test administered by a licensed psychologist
- \* 99th percentile achievement in reading or math on a nationally normed test
- \* Score on Iowa Acceleration Scale indicating a need for acceleration
- \* Teacher recommendation
- \* Parent approval
- \* Principal approval

Once a student is being considered for grade acceleration, a team will be formed to gather

information and make a decision. This team is led by the principal and will have the following members: AIG Specialist, current grade-level classroom teacher, future grade-level classroom teacher representative, and the parents. While the SCALE team is not part of this process, they can be consulted for recommendations. The AIG Specialist will submit a recommendation to the team based on the criteria established, however the final decision to accelerate a grade level will be made by the principal and parent.

## CREDIT BY DEMONSTRATED MASTERY (CDM)

Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) is the process by which Buncombe County Schools, based on a body-of-evidence, awards a student credit in a particular course without the student being required to complete the classroom instruction. "Mastery" is defined as a student's command of course material at a level that demonstrates a deep understanding of the content standards and application of knowledge. BCS offers the CDM process for any course taught within Buncombe County Schools. All students in Buncombe County Schools are eligible to request this opportunity to earn credits for high school courses in grades 9-12 and/or for high school courses offered in grades 7-8 in middle school.

Policies and procedures that govern CDM are posted on the Buncombe County Schools website, and a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section provides additional information for parents and students. An informational PowerPoint also reviews the program components for interested parties and is available to district educators.

CDM is not a replacement for differentiated services designed to meet the learning needs of students. CDM is, in fact, a way to differentiate and personalize learning based on individual student needs of content replacement. CDM does not replace the typical accelerated learning compacted curriculum by groups of advanced students. CDM should not replace current compacted pathways for groups of students. Likewise, CDM should not be an additional requirement to determine who will work at a faster rate within the classroom. CDM is meant for individual students who need content replacement and subject acceleration clearly, without any learning of the content in the school setting.

### **Practice H**

Implements intentional strategies to broaden access to advanced learning opportunities for under-represented AIG populations, including culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional. These strategies may include talent development efforts.

**District Response:** The Buncombe County School System is a diverse school system, especially in terms of culture and linguistics. We have a large population of Ukrainian, Russian, and Hispanic children; there are sixty-two languages spoken in this school system. We also have a large population of economically disadvantaged students which leads most of our elementary, intermediate, and middle schools to be classified as eligible for Title I support. For this reason, our AIG Department has sought out substantial professional development and collaboration during our PLC time so we can effectively support our diverse learners.

Our department invested in the text *Special Populations in Gifted Education: Understanding Our Most Able Students from Diverse Backgrounds* by Jaime Castellano and Andrea Dawn Frazier to guide professional development that would allow us to consider our cultural bias, evaluate the services we offer to all our advanced learners, and create specific strategies that would increase our responsiveness to those learners who have been traditionally underrepresented in gifted education. Because of this work, we have developed purposeful collaborations with other specialists who serve all our students such as English as a Second Language educators, Exceptional Children specialists, our Special Services Department, and Homeless/Migrant Educators. These collaborations have helped us better understand and locate advanced learners in these groups.

Because we know that access to advanced opportunities and experiences are essential to developing the talents of all students, we have two levels of talent development in grades K-3 and school-based oversight teams in all buildings K-8. The Problem Solvers program in grades K-2 allows teachers and AIG Specialists to identify students who have advanced pursuits, exceptional academic abilities, or precocious interests. Our 3rd grade Talent Development program more closely aligns participation with students who continue to demonstrate the need for advanced content, training, and nurturing. Because we recognize that the needs of advanced learners may best be developed in ways that are unique to the diverse and distinct identities of the communities from which they come, each school-based SCALE Team has the oversight to facilitate advanced learning experiences and opportunities that can best support the students in their schools.

For identification, BCS commits to the use of culturally unbiased tests including the NNAT and TONI-IV to assist in identifying students from unique backgrounds. Students who may need special consideration for identification or who exhibit characteristics shared by at-risk populations may be referred to the Administrative Placement Team (APT), a second-tier identification team that specializes in considering alternative measures for placement decisions. We continue to provide staff development opportunities to assist the AIG staff in understanding the learning differences that influence a gifted child's educational experience.

### **Practice I**

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

**District Response:** Buncombe County Schools recognizes that each unique school must provide an array of K-12 extracurricular programs both during and outside school hours to meet the needs of the populations with which it works. School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence (SCALE) Teams oversee the extra-curricular programs and events that are considered appropriately enriching and culturally responsive. These opportunities range from school-based weekly enrichment groups and special interest groups to local, statewide, and national contests and programs that address the diverse abilities and needs of our gifted students. Current opportunities may include, but are not limited to: MATHCOUNTS, Geography Bee, Spelling Bee, Odyssey of the Mind, Battle of the Books, Duke TIP, Science Olympiad, and Governor's School.

As these opportunities are unique to each school, AIG Specialists and SCALE Teams notify parents of opportunities through newsletters, emails, and websites. AIG Specialists maintain a list of these opportunities in the AIG Evidences Notebook and share applicable events,

clubs, and groups during transition meetings and placement meetings. Yearly survey data indicates that the majority of all stakeholders agree that Buncombe County Schools encourages extracurricular programs and events that enhance and further develop the needs and interests of gifted students.

**Ideas for Strengthen the Standard:**

- Implement checklist for identifying students from special populations or those who are at-risk for under performance
- Monitor a variety of existing local and statewide assessment data to determine effectiveness of current grouping practices
- Develop longitudinal data study to evaluate effectiveness of APT and special populations practices

**Sources of Evidence:**

- DEPs/IDEPs
- Program Descriptions of Extensions of Core Services
- AIG Specialists' Schedules
- AIG Student Folder
- List of LEA and school staff development opportunities
- Cluster grouping data (reported by schools)
- Digital Presentation of 2019-2022 Gifted Services Plan
- Agendas from School Faculty Meetings
- Service Delivery notebooks
- Agendas from meetings with transitioning students and parents
- Agendas from AIG staff meetings
- Agendas from school-based meetings where AIG business is conducted
- AIG specialist's professional development data
- LEA and school websites
- Parent newsletters
- Student progress reports
- Student contracts
- AIG Administrative Team Data
- EOG data (trends for identification of underrepresented populations)
- Data illustrating student participation in extracurricular activities (i.e. MATHCOUNTS, Odyssey of the Mind, Battle of the Books, Duke TIP, Science Olympiad, Governor's School)
- School-level and AIG PLC notes and agendas
- Data of student growth on specifically targeted skills where appropriate
- Flexible grouping data as shown in AIG

### **Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction**

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

#### **Practice A**

Adapts the NC Standard Course of Study (SCOS) K-12 to address a range of advanced ability levels in language arts, mathematics, and other content areas as appropriate through the use of differentiation strategies, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration.

**District Response:** The NCSCOS is the standard curriculum required for all students in the NC public schools; however, this curriculum must be differentiated to meet the diverse academic needs of our gifted students. In 2016-2018 survey responses, an average of 86% of classroom teachers agree or strongly agree that BCS uses challenging, rigorous, and relevant curriculum to meet the needs of gifted learners. Administrators and parents also agree with an average 87% approval rating. Feedback from AIG Specialists indicated that many instructional materials from our previous enrichment curriculum lacked current and updated resources. Therefore, the AIG Department's professional development for 2018-2019 focused on curricular revisions to include more rigor, standards-based extension, and technology to engage advanced learners.

Buncombe County Schools believes that the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Framework provides invaluable support for academic growth and personal achievement for all students. Whole class differentiation is the bedrock of Tier 1 service and is the foundation upon which all other enrichment, extension, and acceleration may occur. For that purpose, the AIG Department recognizes the district-wide shared responsibility of training, supporting, and challenging teachers to provide engaging differentiated lessons based upon the NC Standard Courses of Study in every classroom where advanced learners participate.

Individual school needs vary as widely as classroom needs. For this reason, AIG Specialists both receive and provide professional development training in strategies for differentiation that include, but are not limited to: anchor activities, curriculum compacting, Socratic seminars, problem-based learning, experiential learning, and tiered assignments. Co-teaching opportunities are encouraged as an additional way to meet the instructional and developmental needs of students; co-teaching supports are optional services and are scheduled as AIG Specialist time allows.

Because the BCS service model is based upon the Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model, both enrichment pull-out services and classroom extensions in and out of the classroom are essential components of Buncombe County's plan to support the needs of advanced learners in the Tier II service of the MTSS Framework. A rigorous and engaging curriculum map of concept-based units governs enrichment group instruction for grades 3-8. This curriculum includes advanced content and resources that challenge gifted learners by integrating STEAM units, critical thinking, and technology skills with topics in Humanities/Literacy and Mathematical/Logical strands.

Resources for instruction must be research-based, current, timely, and appropriate for the needs of gifted learners. Our revised enrichment curriculum balances humanities-based units and STEAM

opportunities to develop future readiness skills, encourage hands-on engagement, and allow students to create and produce products that meet real-world needs. Topics of study that develop the social-emotional being of advanced learners comprehensively address the holistic student needs.

### **Practice B**

Employs diverse and effective instructional practices according to students' identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles, to address a range of learning needs at all grade levels.

**District Response:** According to 2016-2018 surveys of administrators, 99% agree that the school provides diverse and effective instructional practices according to students' identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles to develop the highest potential of the student. Over 88% of teachers in both elementary and middle school agree or strongly agree that BCS uses 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 students reported that they learned new information in their AIG enrichment classes with 95% assurance. These survey results indicate that current practices are effective, yet they also provide rationale for continuation of diversifying and aligning curriculum decisions.

Every effort is made to assign AIG Specialists to buildings within the same district so a continuity of instructional services can be established. Classroom teachers and AIG Specialists support students by offering differentiated instruction that allows for exploration, problem-solving, higher-order thinking, consideration of student strengths and weaknesses, and performance-based research products. Concept-based units with overarching essential questions and multiple engagement opportunities address student learning preferences and require students to examine personal opinions, prior experiences, newly gained information, and content research for deep and enduring understandings.

Gifted students are placed in cluster groups to facilitate the peer interaction necessary for their cognitive growth; flexible grouping options are also utilized to meet the unique needs of the gifted student. Cluster group teachers are trained specifically to understand the needs of gifted learners through participation in the BCS AIG Local Credentials Institute; cluster teachers document the ways that they differentiate the curriculum for their gifted students on an annual record of classroom differentiation activities. The annual Differentiation Documentation Form is filed in an individual student's AIG folder and provided to parents as evidence of research-based instructional practices provided in classrooms.

AIG Specialists engage in professional development that emphasizes rigor, complexity, sophistication, and abstractness in order to share these strategies more effectively with teachers. Recent professional development opportunities have included work with the Icons of Depth and Complexity (Sandra Kaplan) and Achieve the Core's Instructional Practice Guide to evaluate rigor embedded in units of study. Thematic units continue to be developed with these theories and practices in mind. Our AIG Department also shares instruction in these practices during school-based and whole district professional development days.

In addition to direct classroom support and instruction, AIG Specialists guide advanced learners toward enrichment and extension activities on and off campus that fit with their needs and interests. Many specialists host clubs, school-based projects, and/or competition teams that engage student

interests and provide multiple outlets for leadership and creativity.

Gifted learners share the ability to think with more complexity and abstraction than other learners of the same age, experience, and environment. These gifted learners require a challenging, engaging, and differentiated curriculum framed from overarching essential questions. The National Association for Gifted Children asserts that the "use of essential questions in curricular planning and delivery can help students learn independently and also provide the connective tissue between what matters at the heart of the curriculum and assessment of what students have learned."

### **Practice C**

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

**District Response:** The National Association for Gifted Children advocates that:

"Good teaching for gifted learners happens at a higher 'degree of difficulty' than for many students their age. In the Olympics, the most accomplished divers perform dives that have a higher 'degree of difficulty' than those performed by divers whose talents are not as advanced. A greater degree of difficulty calls on more skills -more refined skills- applied at a higher plane of sophistication. A high 'degree of difficulty' for gifted learners in their talent areas implies that their content, processes and products should be more complex, more abstract, more open-ended, more multifaceted than would be appropriate for many peers. They should work with fuzzier problems, will often need less teacher-imposed structure, and (in comparison to the norm) should have to make greater leaps of insight and transfer than would be appropriate for many their age. Gifted learners may also (but not always) be able to function with a greater degree of independence than their peers."

For this reason, our AIG Department continues to gather materials that promote advanced and sophisticated thinking. Our AIG Specialist self-assessment of the current gifted curriculum recognizes strength in humanities-based units and purposeful growth in STEAM units. These STEAM opportunities are designed to meet the needs of future ready learners and to support Buncombe County School initiatives. Data shows 80% administration and 73% teacher satisfaction for this practice. For sustained curricular growth and vertical alignment, it is essential that AIG Specialists continue working in the PLC model of improvement. Monthly PLC work sessions help assure continuity, growth, and innovation within gifted programming and across the district. Embedding research-based rigor and complexity is an ongoing and dynamic process.

AIG Specialists advance classroom differentiation work via collaboration with content teachers and curriculum coaches to support instruction, provide research-based strategies for extension, and support individual student needs. The AIG department purchases and distributes instructional resources that support the work of differentiation such as the Differentiating Instruction with Menus by Laurie Westphal and Differentiation for Gifted Learners: Going Beyond the Basics by Diane Heacox and Richard Cash. Resource libraries are maintained in individual schools to support teacher needs, and AIG Specialists may request needed materials from the district AIG department. These resource libraries include print and digital resources.

At the district level, materials and instructional resources are also available for use to support advanced learners. These materials provide hands-on opportunities for students to make real-world meaning from content standards. These resources are available for AIG Specialist check-out and the AIG Lead Facilitators provide coaching and model lessons in their use with students. Resources include, but are not limited to:

- Jacob's Ladder
- Hands-on Equations
- Greek and Latin root words and stems programs
- Marcy Cook math materials
- Creative Beginnings materials
- Socratic seminars resources
- Tom Snyder computer simulations
- Financial Literacy Units
- Stock Market Game
- Problem/project-based learning units
- Breakout Boxes from Breakout.EDU
- Hummingbird Duo robots from BirdBrain Technologies
- Sphero BOLT sets from Orbotics
- Sphero Sprk+ robot set from Orbotics
- Makey Makeys classroom invention sets from JoyLabz
- Rubik's Cubes from YouCanDoTheCube.Com

Buncombe County Schools is committed to the development of locally written gifted curriculum resource units based on state and national standards. These units are challenging and developmentally appropriate for gifted learners. Understanding by Design (UbD) developed by Wiggins and McTighe, as well as gifted curriculum models developed by Sandra Kaplan and Carol Ann Tomlinson, are used as curriculum development guides.

Buncombe County Schools' AIG program employs a wide variety of advanced educational materials and resources to enrich, extend, and accelerate the curriculum. The curriculum maps and units that are used address a wide range of ability levels and include many entry points.

#### **Practice D**

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

**District Response:** Gifted students require authentic, challenging, differentiated curriculum and instruction to meet their intellectual need for complexity and abstraction. Within the context of the NCSCOS, students must also learn essential skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. Gifted learners must develop these skills to become successful contributors to our global society.



According to Carol Ann Tomlinson's research article What It Means to Teach Gifted Learners Well, "Good teaching for gifted learners requires an understanding of 'supported risk.' Highly able learners often make very good grades with relative ease for a long time in school. They see themselves (and often rightly so) as expected to make 'As,' get right answers, and lead the way. In other words, they succeed without 'normal' encounters with failure. Then, when a teacher presents a high-challenge task, the student feels threatened. Not only has he or she likely not learned to study hard, take risks and strive, but the student's image is threatened as well. A good teacher of gifted students understands that dynamic, and thus invites, cajoles and insists on risk but in a way that supports success." Our units challenge students with the iterations of ideas and products designed to address real-world issues and difficulties.

The Buncombe County Schools AIG curriculum goals provide a structured framework for the development of future ready skills. Units focus on high-level content, standards-based skills, critical thinking, and creative problem solving. Performance-based assessment is an integral part of the units; students have multiple options to demonstrate mastery of skills and knowledge.

Buncombe County Schools' move to a 1:1 technology environment provides the platform for more differentiated and personalized instruction through the use of adaptive technologies and enriched content. All district teachers, including AIG Specialists, receive comprehensive, ongoing training from our Digital Learning Team in strategies to engage learners via these devices. Enrichment class STEAM units currently include computer programming, engineering, applied technologies, mentorships, and/or integrated science activities.

Additionally, each elementary school contains a STEM lab that provides a platform for individualized and differentiated instruction in the areas of applied technology, engineering and integrated science. Collaborations between the BCS Elementary STEM coach and AIG Lead Facilitators as well as individual school STEM lab facilitators and AIG Specialists support the alignment of these activities and skills to avoid duplications. These hands-on tasks build capacity for student product development via the engineering task model.

## AIG DIRECT INSTRUCTION EXPECTATIONS

### Problem Solver Program Goals - Grades 1-2

Students participating in Problem Solvers will:

- Make appropriate use of activities which extend manipulation, experimentation, and application
- Develop reasoning skills through logic and mathematical problem-solving activities
- Develop a sensitivity to language and an awareness of the functions of words and figurative expressions as they contribute to the appreciation of quality literature
- Develop skills of independent, critical, and creative thinking skills

### Talent Development and AIG Enrichment Classroom Goals - Grades 3-8

AIG Specialists in grades 3–8 continue to augment and extend NCSCOS goals and objectives during enrichment class instruction. Talent Development and AIG students are expected to:

- Gain awareness of themselves as individuals who have unique academic and social-emotional needs.
- Engage in meaningful work that strengthens independent, critical, and creative thinking skills.
- Foster independence in identifying and solving meaningful problems.
- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively in increasingly complex contexts.
- Think critically about humankind and demonstrate social responsibility in a global community.
- Collaborate effectively with diverse teams to accomplish a common goal.
- Commit to learning as a lifelong process and demonstrate accountability for one's own learning.

AIG specialists plan and implement lessons from each of the four AIG Curricular Strands:

- ❖ Social-Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners
- ❖ Humanities/ Literacy
- ❖ Mathematical/ Logical
- ❖ STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics)

Critical and creative thinking skills will be embedded within each strand. While specific grade-level objectives, expected activities, and possible performance tasks can be found in the addendum, the following summary provides a look at the overarching AIG work by grade level:

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### Grade 3

Theme/Big Idea: Community and Relationships

Essential Questions:

- What makes a community?
- How does where you live influence how you live?
- How do parts contribute to a whole?
- How is our understanding of community constructed through and by language?
- How are people transformed through their relationships with others?
- What do effective problem solvers contribute to communities?

Enduring Understandings:

- Communities are complex and vibrant relationships among people, ideas, geography, and culture.
- Communities change and grow throughout time by the contributions of the people who live there.
- Individual parts are essential to a healthy whole.
- Communities and individuals function in relationship with each other.
- The structures and behaviors of living organisms help them adapt to their environments so they can survive.

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### Grade 4

Theme/Big Idea: Patterns and Change

Essential Questions:

- How are patterns illustrated across academic contents?
- What patterns influence personal or collective behaviors?
- How and when should patterns be changed?
- How does finding the common characteristics among similar problems help me to be a more efficient problem solver?
- How can disappointments and mistakes change us for the better?
- How can something appear stable when it is actually changing?
- How can patterns be used to predict results and solve problems?
- What patterns exist within effective communication skills?
- How is mathematics used to measure, model, and calculate patterns and change?

Enduring Understandings:

- Understanding self is a powerful strategy to build successful life patterns.
  - Considering the perspectives of others helps build my ability to change and grow.
  - External and internal factors can change individuals.
  - Patterns and relationships can be represented numerically, graphically, symbolically, and verbally.
  - Patterns provide insights into potential relationships.
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Grade 5

Theme/Big Idea: Power and Control

Essential Questions:

- How do you know when/if you have power?
- How does power flow and shift?
- How does power or the lack of power affect individuals?
- In a culture where we are bombarded with other people trying to define or control us, how does one form an identity that remains true and authentic for her/himself?
- How does a society determine necessary or effective controls?
- What turning points determine or control our individual pathways to adulthood?
- What are the responsibilities of the individual and society in regard to the control or health of the environment?
- How does communication affect power and control?

Enduring Understandings:

- Power can be understood physically, metaphorically, scientifically, and relationally.
- Power is defined by cultural interpretation.
- Societies often develop controls that benefit themselves.
- People develop systems to manage conflict and create order.
- Conflict resolution can involve aggression, compromise, cooperation, and change.

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Grade 6

Theme/Big Idea: Courage & Action

Essential Questions:

- From where does courage originate?
- How does courage inspire action?
- What is the role of a hero or "she-roe" (coined by Maya Angelou) in a culture?
- How do various cultures reward / recognize their heroes and "she-roes"?
- When does a positive personality trait become a tragic flaw?
- What are the factors that move individuals / communities / nations to great sacrifice and what are the consequences?
- In the face of adversity, what causes some individuals to prevail while others fail?
- How are belief systems represented and reproduced through history, literature, art, and music?
- How do beliefs, ethics, or values influence different people's behavior?

Enduring Understandings:

- It is possible for every person to make a difference.
- Ambition and drive are important for progress, but they should be balanced by moral courage and ethical choices.
- There are two sides to every story; in order to be effectively persuaded, one must objectively consider both sides.
- There is a consequence to every action or inaction.

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Grade 7

Theme/Big Idea: Chaos and Order

Essential Questions:

- How do you maintain or develop character amid chaos?
- What are the positive and negative aspects of both chaos and order?
- What role does chaos play in the creative process?
- What are the politics and consequences of war, and how do these vary based on an individual or cultural perspective?
- What are the benefits and consequences of questioning or challenging social order?
- What are the responsibilities and consequences of globalization?
- How can conflict be memorialized without celebration?

Enduring Understandings:

- Chaos can propel people to either positive or negative change.
- Individuals control and can choose how experiences affect themselves.
- Effectively engaging in a collaborative discussion can help individuals understand both themselves and others.
- Organization is critical to the acquisition, application, and evaluation of information.

- Examining social and civic issues helps to expand one's understanding of the world, its people, and themselves.
- Differences in cultural, political, and economic systems can foster sectional tensions that can escalate into acrimony and result in conflict.
- Recognizing a diversity of viewpoints benefits all.

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## Grade 8

### Theme/Big Idea: Justice and Rights

#### Essential Questions:

- What is freedom?
- What is the relationship between freedom and responsibility?
- What is the relationship between privacy, freedom, and security?
- How do individuals reconcile competing belief systems within a given society (e.g., moral beliefs conflicting with legal codes)?
- When a person's individual choices are in direct conflict with his/her society, what are the consequences of action or inaction?
- When is it appropriate to challenge the beliefs or values of society?
- How do stereotypes influence how we look at and understand the world?
- How do beliefs, ethics, or values influence different people's behavior?
- When does government have the right to restrict the freedoms of people?

#### Enduring Understandings:

- The study of the continuum of human civilization reveals the ideals, beliefs, values, and institutions of its people.
- The concepts of "justice" and "rights" are fluid and have changed throughout history and between cultures.
- With freedom comes responsibility.
- The meaning of freedom is both individual and universal.
- Looking closely at ourselves can make us more sensitive to how we see and think about others and heighten our awareness of our own and others' beauty.
- Talking about challenging or confusing topics requires sensitivity and thoughtfulness.
- While stereotypes can be helpful in increasing efficiency, they can be detrimental to relationships.
- Humans evaluate another's argument by examining valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence in order to determine the validity of the claim.

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The AIG Curriculum Map is reviewed annually and updated as necessary. It is a working document that is continually reviewed and updated to remain current with future ready skills, cutting-edge technology, and current research-based practices in general and gifted education.

## Grades 9-12

Students maintain the opportunity to self-select Honors, Advanced Placement, College/Career

Promise Dual Enrollment, NCVPS, or other online courses. Counselors and school-based mentors assist students in selecting courses from their areas of strength, interests, and desire for future education, career, or other service goals. Buncombe County Schools is currently in financial negotiations to acquire the use of more advanced software for student educational planning that can provide comprehensive college and career readiness solutions to help districts and schools align student strengths and interests to post-secondary goals.

Survey data composite summaries from administrators, teachers, and parents between 2016-2018 indicate strong satisfaction in AIG programming and supports in the critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and innovation development areas.

### **Practice E**

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

**District Response:** Buncombe County Schools uses varied and ongoing curriculum and assessments to meet the academic, intellectual, social and emotional needs of gifted learners and to provide equity and excellence in the overall educational program. The consistent use of data to inform instruction demonstrates a responsiveness to student needs and an overall procedural expectation for meeting students where they are while actively challenging them toward exceptional growth.

Using locally-developed common assessments, state EOG and EOC testing, NC Check-ins, and informal observations, BCS teachers determine students' current academic performance and ensure their educational needs are met. AIG Specialists collaborate with administrators, classroom teachers, counselors, curriculum coaches, and other specialists to analyze assessments of gifted students and support their growth. Through the Dufour PLC model, teachers determine the needs individual students and group them accordingly. Flexible groups are dependent upon student concept mastery, pre-assessment data, formative data, and summative tasks.

Within the enrichment class, the AIG Specialists duplicate these processes of utilizing data as they regularly rely on rubrics to evaluate students' progress through the AIG curriculum in order to support a wide range of student needs and abilities. AIG Specialists continue utilizing the NC AIG website, Canvas, Google Classroom, and other available resources to support teacher ability to evaluate and use student data effectively.

AIG Specialists are included in all assessment training (EVAAS, PowerSchool, NC Check-in, etc.) and meet with county-wide Data Coaches to disaggregate data applicable to AIG students. Specialists access individual growth projections for students to identify students who need remediation and/or small group support. Elementary AIG Specialists use CogAT testing to assure equitable screening opportunities for all students as well as a nationally normed achievement test.

### **Practice F**

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

instructional practices.

**District Response:** Buncombe County recognizes that gifted learners have unique social and emotional needs and may feel different from peers of their own age, experience, and environment; therefore, the district is committed to providing appropriate support systems and counseling to assure affective well-being. The National Association for Gifted Children advises that schools should create support programs that help gifted students from diverse backgrounds develop strong academic identities, learn coping strategies, and gain resilience. For this reason, every individual school has a site-based SCALE Team that can address the unique population of learners within its building. By tiering our supports to address needs within the individual classroom, during enrichment pullout, and on the campus as a whole, we remain aware, vigilant, and responsive to student necessity.

Affective growth of the gifted child is addressed through purposeful clustering for gifted students, encouraging persistence for task completion, practicing growth mindset thinking, honing leadership skills, encouraging creative thinking, and valuing intellectual risk taking. These practices occur in a supportive, nurturing environment where cluster group teachers have received local training in research-based methods to support gifted student needs.

Affective education lessons are incorporated into the enrichment class curriculum. The focus of these lessons is to help each student understand and deal successfully with his/her giftedness and address unique educational needs. These lessons help students as they transition into the AIG program and between school levels. Topics include, but are not limited to: gifted awareness, multiple intelligences, awareness of multiple perspectives, perfectionism, anxiety, and coping with the unique stressors that come with being gifted. Gifted awareness lessons are vertically aligned on an ongoing basis to address needs.

Every BCS school is supported by a School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence (SCALE) Team in order to foster strong connections with counseling and support staff that ensure the social and emotional needs specific to advanced learners are met across the entire campus. Appropriate counseling and mental health supports are available and accessed as needed. The SCALE Team is charged with making sure that campus activities remain responsive to the needs of the advanced learners and support them as effectively as possible.

### **Practice G**

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

**District Response:** Buncombe County recognizes that gifted learners, including children from poverty, are shaped by their early educational experiences. To ensure that their potential is developed and optimized, young children need access to an appropriately challenging and engaging education early in their schooling that builds upon the concept of flexibility and response to student indicators.

Nurturing Giftedness in Young Children by Wendy Roedell asserts that "it is important to remember that these children very often do not develop evenly. In fact, young gifted children frequently show peaks of extraordinary performance rather than equally high skill levels in all cognitive areas. The

child who learns to read at age 3 or who shows unusually advanced spatial reasoning ability, for example, may not be the child with the highest IQ or the earliest language development. Unique patterns of development can be observed within a group of gifted children, and uneven development is frequently evident in the pattern of a single child. In some cases, it seems as though children's abilities develop in spurts, guided by changes in interest and opportunity." Problem Solvers responds to these characteristics of student development.

The Buncombe County Problem Solvers program is available for students in first and second grades who demonstrate a need for enrichment beyond the regular classroom setting. Problem Solvers participants are not formally identified as Academically or Intellectually Gifted, but the needs of these advanced students in first and second grade are addressed through activities that foster creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, and provide access to advanced content. Since unique patterns of development can be observed in young children, the program is fluid and designed so students can attend Problem Solvers groups according to their individual needs at any given time.

Students are recommended for participation by their classroom teacher and/or the gifted specialist based on intellectual and/or academic ability, creativity, motivation, and other assessments or observations by the gifted specialist or other school personnel. Recommendation is based on outstanding performance on these indicators as compared to typical children of the same age in their regular educational setting. AIG Specialists collaborate with teachers in grades 1 and 2 to help them recognize potential in children from under-represented groups. Resources such as Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS) and Thinking Skills & Key Concepts by Parks and Black assist teachers in recognizing above average performance.

Classroom teachers, AIG personnel, and other instructional staff collaborate and develop differentiated curriculum and instruction to cultivate potential in K-2 learners. Our primary tasks include making appropriate and advanced content available via higher order thinking skills, manipulative math materials, inquiry through dialogue, and language experience activities. The learning environment also offers the opportunity to discover intellectual peers at an early age.

#### K- 2 Program Services:

- In Kindergarten, services are consultative. AIG Specialists work with Kindergarten teachers to differentiate curriculum and provide options to parents for differentiation at home. Our BCS Kindergarten Task Force provides newsletters to teachers and parents with resources, differentiation strategies, and signs of early giftedness.
- In 1st and 2nd grades, the AIG Specialist leads Problem Solver groups where students are provided with enrichment activities and exercise of their critical thinking skills.
- Problem Solvers first grade participants will meet a minimum of 30 minutes every other week.
- Problem Solvers second grade participants will meet a minimum of 30 minutes weekly.
- Problem Solvers participation letters explain the nurturing program to parents and clarify that services are fluid and separate from any future AIG evaluation or service. AIG Specialists are available for conferences with parents of K-2 advanced learning students as needed.



### **Practice H**

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

**District Response:** Collaboration among AIG personnel, classroom teachers, counselors, administrators, and other relevant staff related to the gifted student's success is essential as we implement a differentiated curriculum. AIG Specialists possess specialized knowledge about instructional strategies and curriculum modifications appropriate for gifted students. Therefore, AIG Specialists must facilitate collaboration with regular education teachers, parents, and other relevant instructional personnel to plan and utilize appropriate materials and strategies. As AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, and curriculum specialists continue to align curriculum and materials with the NCSCOS, continued communication will be essential to facilitating student success.

The AIG Department participates in monthly PLC work to plan advanced content lessons, review research-based strategies, participate in professional development, and coordinate alignment of curricular activities. Instructional and curricular resources are shared via platforms such as Google Drive, Canvas, and Google Classroom. The AIG Specialists collaborate with classroom teachers, other school personnel, and curriculum coaches to plan for the academic needs of gifted students and assist teachers with reflecting on differentiation practices. These collaborations move us closer to the goal that each gifted student is challenged all day, every day.

On individual campuses, school-based SCALE Teams provide a district collaborative structure for:

- Making decisions about AIG identification cases
- Governing advanced learning initiatives
- Ensuring school-wide enrichment opportunities for students
- Advocating for needs of all high achievers
- Building capacity for clear communication between stakeholders
- Combating advanced student withdrawals
- Monitoring transition plans for advanced students between district schools
- Supporting professional development for differentiation
- Participating in school self-assessments for advanced learning programs offered

The BCS Instructional Framework ensures that classroom teachers use formative assessments daily to determine the needs of every student. AIG Specialists participate in grade level Professional Learning Communities as time allows and advocate for AIG student needs during PLCs at the school level. Clear communication is encouraged between EC, Student Services, and AIG departments to ensure that needs of twice exceptional learners are not overlooked.

### **Practice I**

Develops and documents a student plan that articulates the differentiated curriculum and instruction services that match the identified needs of the K-12 AIG student, such as a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). This document is reviewed annually with parents/families to ensure effective programming, provide a continuum of services, and support school transitions.

**District Response:** Transitions can be tough for children and adults alike; Buncombe County seeks to be proactive in meeting the needs of transitioning advanced learners and their families. The Davidson Institute for Talent Development suggests that "some gifted children need longer than others to transition to new places and spaces, particularly if [children are] moving to a new level or building. High-ability children need peers who are socially, emotionally, and intellectually connected to them, and sometimes their 'true peers' are not their age mates." For this reason, AIG Specialists are critical components of the transition process and must accept an active role in ensuring that student and family connections are made. Yearly meetings with parents strengthen open lines of communication and review specific and focused differentiation services for gifted students as they move to each new grade level.

The Buncombe County Schools' Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) articulates the learning environment and differentiation modifications that are required for individual student success. This document is based upon the student's documented needs/identification and is created/reviewed during student placement meetings and/or parent conferences. Parent input is necessary to ensure that services are responsive to student needs. For this reason, parental permission is required and documented before any change in student service may be implemented via a DEP.

Additional required documentation assures uninterrupted programming across the student's educational experience regardless of transitions between district schools. An Annual Review details student performance, AIG Specialist observations, and continuing levels of service for each identified student. A Cluster Differentiation Documentation Form highlights the classroom instructional strategies specifically used to challenge advanced learners. Classroom teachers, in collaboration with their AIG Specialist, complete the Differentiation Documentation Form as a syllabus of expected activities for the year or as a summative record of differentiation that has occurred. Copies of these documents for grades 4-8 are maintained in each student's AIG folder on campus and sent home at the end of each school year. Communication of performance in AIG enrichment class is sent home quarterly as an additional communication about student progress within enrichment services.

Supporting student and family transitions allows advanced learners to develop a sense of community that transcends an individual school. AIG Specialists meet with parents and students to discuss program information, share details of curriculum, and review student services during any transition between school facilities. These meetings assure that gifted students develop a sense of belonging and that parent concerns are addressed. AIG Specialists also participate in Open House events (K-8) to share information about the AIG program and its comprehensive service for advanced learners on an individual campus. As needed, AIG specialists meet with families of twice exceptional students and special education teachers to ensure that high level programming addresses unique student needs.

**Ideas for Strengthen the Standard:**

- Continue collaborations among content area coaches, classroom teachers, and AIG specialists to improve rigorous instruction
- Implement and refine updated curriculum maps with a continued focus on vertical alignment and applicable gifted research

- Investigate ways to encourage AIG students to apply their learning in the context of real-world situations (mentorships, service learning, opportunities for civic involvement, etc.)
- Investigate ways to help support teacher PLC meetings to address needs of gifted learners
- Consider to tiered levels of professional development for classroom teachers to build capacity for novice, proficient, and advanced differentiation strategies
- Adopt and/or vertically align social/emotional curriculum
- Investigate creating digital student portfolios to demonstrate student growth across enrollment years

**Sources of Evidence:**

- Student AIG folders that contain:
  - Differentiated Education Plans
  - Annual Review Documents
  - Cluster Group Differentiation Documentation Forms
  - Pertinent student identification records
- Student products; formal and informal student presentations
- Student exit tickets, journal responses, and/or rubrics
- Teacher Observation Records
- Samples of Enrichment Class Lesson Plans
- Problem Solver Lesson Plans
- Professional development opportunities for AIG Specialists and classroom teachers
- Buncombe County Schools AIG Curriculum Resource units
- Buncombe County Schools AIG Curriculum Maps
- Lists of supplementary instructional resources
- Survey results from administrators, parents, teachers, and students
- AIG and School Staff meetings (agendas and minutes)
- AIG, Parent, and Student Transition meetings (agendas and minutes)
- Records of county-wide curriculum initiatives
- Monthly AIG PLC Agendas
- List of Students served Problem Solvers from Grades 1-2 in Evidence Notebooks
- List of Students served in 3rd grade Talent Development in Evidence Notebooks

## Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

### Practice A

Employs an AIG-licensed educator as lead coordinator to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program and plan.

**District Response:** Because AIG licensed personnel have education and experience in working with gifted populations, it is important that the Buncombe County Gifted Services Plan be developed and maintained by these professionals. Their specialized training and expertise ensure appropriate implementation of the NC Gifted Program Standards and Article 9B. The Buncombe County AIG Program employs Lead AIG Facilitator(s) to coordinate and administer the local program. The Lead AIG Facilitator(s) serve(s) under the auspices of the Buncombe County Schools Curriculum Department and in coordination with the Directors of Elementary/Intermediate, Middle, and High School Education.

Lead AIG Facilitator licensure requirements:

- A clear, non-provisional license in gifted education
- Master's degree in Education or extensive experience in the field of gifted education

Lead AIG Facilitator primary responsibilities include:

- Leads monthly AIG Specialist Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings
- Facilitates Buncombe County AIG Local Credential workshops and other professional development workshops as needed
- Maintains and monitors records of AIG Local Credentials for BCS educators
- Prepares and maintains the Buncombe County Schools Gifted Services Plan
- Manages and audits the AIG budget
- Follows up on decisions and informational items from meetings with AIG Specialists
- Coordinates yearly curriculum development activities for AIG Staff based upon district needs
- Facilitates equitable and comprehensive testing options used for AIG identification
- Inventories, secures, and distributes the testing materials needed for the AIG Program
- Monitors Advanced Placement Team (APT) identification data and administrative placement decisions
- Collaborates with BCS leadership to clarify AIG best practices, plan details and expectations, AIG Specialist placements, and other AIG-related issues
- Facilitates collaboration with state leadership to synergize efforts on behalf of gifted students
- Collaborates with other curriculum specialists (i.e. Title I, North Carolina Virtual Public School, Digital Learning, Curriculum Coaches, ESL, Special Services, etc.)
- Leads AIG Parent and Administrative Advisory Groups
- Monitors AIG subgroup achievement and growth, survey data, and advisory group feedback to

assess program effectiveness and efficacy

- Shares data work with stakeholders and public
- Creates and monitors AIG District website

### **Practice B**

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

**District Response:** The best teachers of gifted children are those with specific training in gifted education who have a genuine interest in and liking of gifted learners (Karen Rogers). Each AIG Specialist is assigned the task of meeting the academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs of gifted learners through a comprehensive and appropriately differentiated educational program. AIG Specialists participate in county-wide and individual training to address these needs. In survey responses, 94% of administrators reported that their AIG licensed specialist frequently or always spends his/her time engaged in tasks which explicitly address the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students.

AIG services are essential to the total instructional program of the school. AIG Specialists are engaged in work that supports the MTSS philosophy of a strongly differentiated core service for all students. Collaborations with classroom teachers and staff development opportunities at individual school levels provide teachers with necessary supports to bring rigor and high task engagement to all classrooms. Additionally, AIG Specialists participate in collaboration and focused staff development during monthly AIG PLC meetings that explicitly addresses the academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs of gifted learners. AIG Specialists share this appropriate and relevant research with classroom teachers in a variety of ways including, but not limited to: PLC meetings, team settings, newsletters, individual student conferences, professional development, and digital communications.

Current AIG Specialists have a clear, non-provisional license in gifted education. However, Lead AIG Facilitator may consider applicants without a clear, non-provisional license when there are limited licensed applicants for AIG Specialist positions. Should an AIG Specialist be hired without a clear, non-provisional license in gifted education, the specialist is expected to complete non-provisional AIG state licensure within two years.

AIG Specialist Job Description:

- Assists in evaluation and implementation of the BCS Gifted Services Plan
- Provides explicit and direct instruction in enrichment groups for identified AIG students in grades 3–8 for a minimum of 45 to 60 minutes per week
- Collaborates with classroom teachers to support classroom differentiation
- Co-teaches in cluster group classes, as time allows
- Supports and/or provides professional development for cluster teachers
- Provides explicit and direct instruction to Problem Solvers groups for students in grades 1 and 2
- Participates in curriculum development activities

- Communicates with parents and the community regarding AIG services
- Receives and processes nominations for gifted services
- Administers and scores necessary aptitude and achievement tests
- Serves as chairperson of the School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence Team (SCALE Team) in each school served
- Prepares and revises Differentiated Education Plans for each identified student
- Maintains local and state headcounts
- Conducts and documents annual reviews of student progress
- Maintains confidential AIG student file documentation
- Participates in monthly PLC meetings
- Maintains an AIG Evidence Notebook

### **Practice C**

Establishes specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, special education teachers, counselors, and school administrators.

**District Response:** Gifted learners require teachers and other personnel involved in their education to have necessary knowledge, skills, and understandings to provide an appropriate and challenging instructional program. Our current survey data indicates that 100% of our principals agree or strongly agree that there are specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services. Eighty-six percent (86%) of elementary teachers and eighty-nine percent (89%) of intermediate and middle school teachers agree that the professional development required is specific and appropriate. We believe that these high standards for professional development and knowledge of gifted learners contribute to the fact that 92.5% of our surveyed students agree that the AIG program is an important part of their learning experience in Buncombe County Schools.

In BCS, the Gifted Services Department provides free staff development to meet this requirement via the AIG Local Credentials Institute. To achieve BCS AIG Local Credentials (1 CEU), educators will:

- Understand the current Buncombe County Schools AIG Plan and the shared levels of responsibility in meeting the needs of gifted learners within our county.
- Recognize gifted learners and understand their unique educational and social-emotional needs.
- Learn research-based methodologies to differentiate the NCSCOS in daily instruction.
- Collaborate with AIG specialists to adapt units of study for advanced learners.
- Teach and reflect upon a differentiated lesson in collaboration with an AIG Specialist.

### QUALIFICATIONS FOR AIG PROGRAM POSITIONS

Lead AIG Facilitator:

- Clear, non-provisional license in gifted education
- Master's degree in education or extensive experience in the field of gifted education

Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted Specialist:

- A clear, non-provisional license in gifted education OR approval for employment by the AIG Lead Facilitator. If not currently licensed, licensure in gifted education must be completed within two years.
- Classroom experience

School Administrator:

- Overall knowledge of the Buncombe County Schools AIG Plan

Classroom Cluster Teacher (Grades 3 – 8):

- Buncombe County AIG Local Credentials (or in process of obtaining Buncombe County AIG Local Credentials)
- or-
- NC License in Gifted Education (K-12)

Teacher of Honors Course or Advanced Placement Course (Grades 9 – 12):

- Buncombe County AIG Local Credentials encouraged
- NC License in Gifted Education (K-12) encouraged

Teacher (includes all licensed instructional personnel with differentiation responsibilities):

- Understanding of the Buncombe County Schools AIG Plan

Other licensed instructional and support personnel:

- Understanding of the Buncombe County Schools AIG Plan

**Practice D**

Provides general education services by personnel who have earned an AIG add-on license or have met the LEA requirements for that position.

**District Response:** Gifted learners require teachers and other personnel involved in their education who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and understandings to meet their needs in an appropriately differentiated instructional program. AIG students are placed into cluster classrooms with teachers who are either NC licensed in Gifted Education (K-12), have obtained our AIG Local Credentials, or are in the process of obtaining these Local Credentials. As evidenced from our 2017-2018 Teacher Survey, 63% of those teachers surveyed had obtained their local AIG Credentials. 94% of principals surveyed reported that they encourage AIG cluster teachers to earn local AIG

Credentials.

In grades 3-8, classroom teachers must complete the Buncombe County Schools AIG Local Credentials course, which is offered twice in the summer just before school begins. Educators who hold NC license in Gifted Education (K-12) are not required to complete the AIG Local Credentials course. AIG Specialists keep documentation of educators who have obtained Local Credentials and/or have achieved licensure in Gifted Education from an Institute of Higher Education (IHE); principals and AIG Specialists review this data annually to assure that students are placed into the most appropriate settings. In the event that students are placed into the gifted program after the school year begins, every effort is made to provide support for teachers who might not have Local Credentials and those teachers are encouraged to begin the process of obtaining credentials.

Our AIG Local Credentials course, BCS Local Credentials Institute, is offered twice each summer. The course is a full day of instruction by our lead AIG facilitators and requires a purposeful collaboration between the teacher and AIG Specialist to develop, teach, and reflect on a rigorous, differentiated lesson. Learning targets and goals for the LCI are outlined in Standard 4, Practice C.

### **Practice E**

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

**District Response:** The Buncombe County School System has a commitment to ensure that the academic, intellectual, social/emotional needs of our AIG students are met. Professional development provides AIG Specialists and other personnel working with gifted students the tools and skills needed to deliver an appropriate differentiated curriculum. For example, our recent survey data indicates that over half of elementary, intermediate, and middle school teachers affirm that this is our current practice. Eighty percent (80%) of local administrators surveyed agree that professional development is aligned with local AIG program goals and district initiatives.

The AIG Program, in collaboration with initiatives in the Curriculum Department, Title I Services, and the Technology Department, offers ongoing professional development opportunities to build AIG cluster teacher proficiencies and to enhance AIG staff expertise. The AIG Curriculum Specialist and Lead AIG Facilitator align professional development with Buncombe County Schools district initiatives and research-based best practices in gifted education. AIG staff members participate in school-based curriculum-based staff development activities to be knowledgeable of curriculum initiatives in the schools. As funding is available, AIG personnel attend national and state gifted conferences and specific subject area workshops and conferences. Technology workshops within the school system are utilized to provide continued support for AIG Specialists.

AIG personnel work collaboratively with instructional support staff (Title I, ESL, curriculum coaches, etc.) to integrate best practices for gifted learners into professional development offerings throughout the district.

AIG Specialists provide an overview of the Buncombe County Schools Gifted Services Plan annually at each school. AIG staff members are available to provide workshop presentations in differentiation, identification, and the social/emotional needs of AIG students. AIG staff are available for parent



workshops regarding the needs of gifted learners.

Additionally, the Buncombe County AIG Local Credentials Institute is offered twice in the summer, just before school begins. Summer enrollment allows principals to ensure that teachers who are assigned AIG clusters will have their credentials before the start of the school year.

In order to obtain AIG Local Credentials, teachers must complete the BCS Local Credentials Institute or complete AIG licensure from an accredited IHE or via the Praxis examination. The Lead AIG Facilitator maintains the Buncombe County AIG Local Credentials database and serves as the staff development coordinator for this program. Information regarding NC License in Gifted Education is provided to interested personnel. AIG Specialists offer support as requested by participants in the licensure process

### **Practice F**

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

**District Response:** For over twenty years, Buncombe County Schools AIG Specialists have met monthly to plan, implement, and refine applications of their professional development. This commitment of time and resources has been instrumental in the professional development of our AIG Specialists and, ultimately, the success of our students. Monthly PLC time allows AIG Specialists time to develop the resources needed to maintain the high level of services designed to meet the needs of gifted learners.

The AIG staff meets monthly in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to engage in data analysis, planning, and curriculum development. During these PLCs, AIG Specialists develop and share interdisciplinary units that extend and enrich the NCSCOS. AIG Specialists are able to refine applications of staff development learning as they plan curriculum and collaborate on lessons, activities, and events. AIG Specialists also participate in school-based staff development initiatives as they are available.

The Lead AIG Facilitator conducts a yearly needs assessment to determine the focus of staff development for the coming year. This data collection drives the content of PLC agendas, county support, and training for the AIG department. AIG forms, information, curriculum resources, and documents are housed on an AIG Canvas course and are accessible by AIG personnel. This storehouse of resources allows AIG Specialists and the Lead AIG Facilitator instant access to content support and curricular strategies. This digital collaboration does not replace the need to meet as a dynamic PLC, but rather it provides documentation of resources and opportunities for continued collaboration.

### **Ideas for Strengthen the Standard:**

- Develop and offer targeted professional development on social/emotional needs of gifted students and content differentiation strategies to high school personnel
- Develop and offer targeted professional development on social/emotional needs of gifted students to guidance counselors
- Work toward obtaining AIG Credentials for classroom teachers who serve students who score Level 5 on Math EOGs (not necessarily AIG identified)
- Develop a PLC opportunity for small groups across the district to meet based on need (curriculum support, planning, etc.)
- Develop tiers of professional development for teachers to address a broad continuum of needs

**Sources of Evidence:**

- AIG Specialist Credentials
- Teacher Evaluation Instrument
- Administrative Team Identification records
- AIG staff Handbook
- AIG staff agendas and minutes
- AIG Specialist's weekly schedules
- Surveys from administrators, parents, teachers, and students
- School-based and district-wide professional development opportunities
- Professional development plans for AIG Staff
- AIG staff professional development records
- Proposed list of staff development activities based on needs assessment
- Class lists and participation logs of AIG Local Credentials course
- List of school-based staff development initiatives
- District database of AIG licensed personnel
- AIG Local Credentials district database
- Number of AIG students clustered per teacher/course
- Cluster Differentiation Documentation forms

## Standard 5: Partnerships

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

### Practice A

Develops partnerships with parents/families that are intentional and meaningful to support the following needs of AIG students:

- \* academic and intellectual
- \* social and emotional

**District Response:** According to Using the National Gifted Education Standards for Teacher Preparation by Dr. Susan K Johnsen, "partnerships should be a cyclical relationship involving IHEs, Pre-K-12 schools/districts, and the larger community to support a continuum of services...to high ability students." These strong partnerships provide critical support for the needs of gifted learners.

Despite collecting evidence of collaboration with parents, families, and community, AIG survey data indicates a need to increase these meaningful partnerships. Forty-one percent (41%) of elementary teachers and forty-four percent (44%) of intermediate/middle school teachers agree that BCS intentionally involves parents, families, and the community in meaningful ways to support gifted education. Only 48% of our AIG parents feel they are involved in meaningful ways. We clearly see a need to build more productive partnerships with parents, and administrators, and the community in the future.

Buncombe County Schools encourages a high level of parental and community involvement. By partnering with families and community members, AIG Specialists are able to effectively solicit support for programming components. Sharing identification procedures and protocol, the Local AIG Plan, and all policies relating to gifted education provide an avenue for input and feedback to provide awareness and ensure improvement. Partners provide an array of financial, academic, and programming support or assistance.

AIG Specialists use survey data and beginning of the year parent contact forms to make connections with parent and family groups who may be interested in becoming partners to support programming options and develop services for gifted learners. AIG Specialists share this information by creating a district-wide database of potential community partnerships. This database is available to all AIG Specialists at the school and district levels.

The BCS AIG department supports family involvement through participation in community events and enrichment activities during and outside school hours to increase partnerships with families and engage AIG students. Our AIG Parent Advisory is made up of parents and community leaders who are from every district in our LEA, providing an array of talents and supports for our gifted learners. Not only does our Parent Advisory allow for input from stakeholders, it also provides a platform to inform and share research regarding the needs of gifted learners. The AIG Parent Advisory meetings provide two-way communication where AIG Lead Facilitators, classroom teachers, and AIG Specialists can share information with parents while also receiving immediate feedback, input on

decisions, and overall concerns from parents and the community at large.

To ensure clear communication with all partners regarding academic and social/emotional needs of students, all AIG identification and placement forms are available in multiple languages, based on district need. AIG Specialists utilize BCS translation services on a regular basis to translate all other forms, letters, surveys and other communication as needed. Interpreters are available to translate at meetings where parents and/or community members are present.

AIG Specialists collaborate with parents and guardians to make sure that AIG student academic and social/emotional needs are met. In response to evidenced needs, AIG Specialists host placement conferences, Open House nights and parent night events, disseminate curriculum resources, arbitrate student concerns, and facilitate transition meetings from elementary school to intermediate/middle school and from intermediate/middle school to high school. Specialists send student progress summaries to parents on a quarterly basis to keep parents informed as well as to provide varied resources for extensions of activities at home. This partnership where communication is expected and consistent each quarter provides a vehicle to share student successes, struggles, and varied social and emotional needs with parents as they develop throughout the year.

AIG Specialists also provide necessary recommendations of student abilities for extra-curricular activities and high school placements. AIG Specialists document these partnerships with parents and guardians in the AIG Evidences Notebook at each school. BCS AIG Department also collaborates with other district departments to target special populations. ESL, EC, and Student Services provide resources for reaching parents and community partners through collaboration among staff at our monthly AIG meetings. In addition to that staff collaboration, those departments provide access for AIG to be present at parent and community meetings where AIG students and parents are present (i.e. Multicultural Night, Curriculum Night, Global Awareness Night, etc.). Documentation of AIG partnerships and involvement is in the form of sign-in sheets, digital communications, and/or conference logs.

#### PARENT COMMUNICATION MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS, GRADES 4-8

- Student Annual Reviews (at the end of each year)
- AIG Placement Conferences (at initial placement)
- Parent Contact and/or Volunteer form (with parent phone, email)
- Open House or Meet The Teacher availability
- AIG Specialist website updated and active
- Newsletter and Student Progress Report (quarterly)
- Differentiation Documentation
- Required annual transition meetings as specified in Standard 2, Practice E

#### **Practice B**

Shares with stakeholders, including all students' parents/families, information regarding the local AIG program, the local AIG plan, and other policies relating to gifted education.

**District Response:** The communication of AIG services, policies, and procedures is necessary and crucial to ensure the integrity and success of the program. Buncombe County Schools shares communication with stakeholders to assist in the collaboration and implementation of the local AIG Plan. According to the 2017-18 end of year Parent Survey data, 91% of parents said they received their child's Annual Review. In the 2017-18 end of year Teachers' Survey, 86% of teachers replied that BCS always/frequently/occasionally intentionally involves parents and families and communicates in meaningful ways to support AIG students. In the 2017-18 Administrators' Survey, 88% of administrators feel there is adequate communication to staff members about the local Gifted Services Plan and AIG program. We will continue to explore various means of communication and find ways to improve to ensure that all stakeholders understand our plan and our program while maintaining efforts that have been successful.

Communication of policies, procedures, and services is essential for ensuring success. The BCS AIG Plan is posted on the Buncombe County Schools' website, and each AIG Specialist maintains a website at the school level that identifies the policies and procedures for student identification as well as a link to the AIG Plan. Information regarding the local AIG Plan is shared at staff meetings in each school yearly. An AIG department brochure has been created for sharing with community members, families, and other stakeholders; the brochure outlines the key aspects of the programs offered to students.

The BCS AIG Plan is shared with families as students are identified and placed into the program during an initial parent placement meeting. AIG Specialists also communicate policies with parents about the AIG program and special events through newsletters, quarterly reports, emails, and automated phone calls. AIG Specialists maintain a current database of parent emails and/or addresses in order to facilitate communication; these databases are part of the AIG Evidences Notebook. Specialists also share with parents and teachers on-going information about AIG curriculum, ongoing projects, and work expectations through email updates, formal and informal conferences, and phone calls as needed.

Advisory groups, campus-based SCALE Teams, and PLC work all ensure that stakeholders share in the responsibility of crafting, implementing, and evaluating the BCS AIG Plan. AIG Lead Facilitators attend district principals and assistant principals' meetings to communicate plan expectations and solicit support for plan development and execution.

In addition to previously mentioned parent communications, AIG Specialists share with parents, yearly, the Annual Review and Differentiation Documentation forms which communicate evidence of student academic progress and differentiation in the regular classroom.

AIG Specialists collaborate with the Buncombe County Schools Communication Department to "share the good news" with community and parent stakeholders about programs, events, and initiatives within their schools and districts. This good news is shared via various social media platforms and newsletters to the public and to school employees through inter-departmental newsletters and digital media. Each AIG Specialist's employee website is updated with good news within their respective schools and classrooms.

### **Practice C**

Establishes and utilizes an advisory group to develop, implement, and monitor the local AIG program and plan. This advisory group is representative of the diverse populations of the district and is at least comprised of community members, AIG parents and families, AIG teachers, and other instructional and support staff.

**District Response:** Article 9B requires that each LEA develop a plan to involve stakeholders in implementing, monitoring, and integrating a local gifted program. Buncombe County Schools serves over 25,000 students; as a result, we have two advisory committees to ensure access to meeting times and locations. These committees include representatives from parents, teachers, administrators, central office representatives, and the AIG department.

The AIG Parent Advisory Committee represents each of the six districts in Buncombe County Schools and meets a minimum of twice each school year. Parent representatives volunteer for this committee by responding to requests from AIG Specialists. AIG Specialist then submit names of interested parents to the district office where parents are selected carefully to ensure district and grade level representation. Parents on this committee are surveyed at the beginning of each year to determine best meeting dates and times. Meeting information is sent to absent parents to ensure they are kept up to date.

The AIG Administrative Advisory Committee includes representation from school administrators, AIG Specialists and teachers from across the LEA; administrators from elementary, intermediate, and middle schools participate. This committee also meets a minimum of twice yearly. A survey is sent out to this committee at the beginning of each school year to determine the best dates and times for meetings. Meeting information is sent to absent committee members to ensure they are kept up to date.

Our AIG Advisory Committees provide guidance and feedback on our local AIG program. Both advisory committees have been instrumental in developing, implementing, and monitoring our local AIG program.

### **Practice D**

Informs parents/families and the community of opportunities available to AIG students on an ongoing basis and in their native language.

**District Response:** Buncombe County Schools AIG believes extracurricular, community-based, and summer opportunities are important for all students. In order to maintain equity, the support of ESL personnel and availability of information and resources in the native language of our families is necessary. As underrepresented populations grow, we want to ensure that these families have access to outside partnership resources. According to the 2017-2018 survey, 75% of parents and 72% of teachers agreed that BCS encourages extra-curricular programs and events that enhance and further develop the needs and interests of all AIG students. The BCS AIG department will

continue to offer a wide variety of academic opportunities while seeking out new program offerings.

Extracurricular, community-based, summer, and in-school opportunities enrich and enhance gifted students' academic and social/emotional growth. AIG Specialists inform parents/families and the community of opportunities available to gifted students on an ongoing basis and in their native language through their websites, quarterly AIG reports, emails, school newsletters, and other communication. Examples of this communication includes, but is not limited to, notification about Duke TIP program, Battle of the Books, Odyssey of the Mind, Destination Imagination, Math Counts, Elevating Elementary Math Competition, a variety of academic and creative camps, Governor's School, Geography Bee, and Science Olympiad. The AIG Specialist at each school will share a brochure in several languages at the Kindergarten Open House event to share programming options with potential families. A database of community-based extracurricular and summer opportunities is used shared with parents and regularly updated.

High school transitions offer additional opportunities for the AIG Department to share information with advanced learners. Our department shares the Transition to 9-12 Gifted Services flyer (Appendix D) with all AIG families as a way to encourage continual selection of challenging academic environments.

### **Practice E**

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

**District Response:** Partnerships provide a framework for decision-making and continuous program improvement (Reis 2006) and help maintain the integrity of the AIG Plan.

Gifted students are members of their larger community; therefore, it is important to develop partnerships with local industry, businesses, and institutes of higher education. Sharing potential partnership opportunities across districts will enable more students to participate in the wide range of services available in the community.

Partnerships are ongoing and developing to support AIG programs and services. AIG specialists collect information from parents about potential community/business/ partnerships during beginning of the year communication as outlined in Practice A. This information is aggregated in a database open to all AIG specialists in Buncombe County Schools. In addition, a form letter is available for AIG specialists to use to reach out to potential partnerships. The letter allows AIG specialists to edit and discuss specific needs and ideas to community partners.

Buncombe County Schools continues a strong partnership between our schools and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College. Early College, one of our three Cooperative Innovative High Schools, is housed on their campus, and student groups tour the campus during their 8th grade year. Through Career and College Promise courses, AIG students and other advanced learners are offered opportunities to take college courses at the community college, either online or on the college campus. This partnership provides advanced courses but also ensures access to college experiences for all advanced learners.

**Ideas for Strengthen the Standard:**

- Post survey results on the Buncombe County Schools website
- Develop purposeful partnerships with local industries and universities to increase student opportunities
- Collaborate with BCS School/Family Support Specialist to present Gifted Services Plan summary to ESL teachers and interpreters, providing background knowledge for parent conferences

**Sources of Evidence:**

- Buncombe County Schools' Gifted Services Plan
- Yearly Gifted Services Plan evaluations
- Survey results from administrators, parents, teachers, and students
- Agendas and minutes from meetings with stakeholders
- School-based Evidence Notebooks
- Disaggregation of EOG data and other performance indicators
- Annual Reviews (in each AIG student record)
- Cluster Teacher Differentiation Documentation forms
- Yearly headcount and individual AIG staff yearly reports
- Record of AIG personnel schedules and caseloads
- Monitoring of course selection for high school gifted students
- School-specific email databases
- Sign-in sheets from parent meetings
- Newsletters, brochures, staff and district websites,
- Parent Placement conference meetings



## **Standard 6: Program Accountability**

The LEA implements, monitors, and evaluates the local AIG program and plan to ensure that all programs and services are effective in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

### **Practice A**

Develops a written AIG plan to describe the local AIG program, in accordance with state legislation and SBE policy (N.C.G.S. 115C-150.5-.8 {Article 9B}), which has been approved by the local board of education and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.

**District Response:** A successful gifted program requires the development of a comprehensive AIG Plan that is developed collaboratively, implemented system-wide to ensure equity and excellence, continuously monitored, and evaluated for effectiveness with input from all stakeholders. Not only is this required by DPI/SBE, it is best practice for AIG programming. BCS AIG has developed a comprehensive plan that meets all criteria while soliciting feedback along the development process to ensure stakeholder involvement in making decisions that impact our students.

Buncombe County Schools' AIG Plan is developed with input from regular education teachers, AIG Specialists, administrators, parents, advisory groups, and district administrators. Our AIG Parent Advisory group meets a minimum of twice annually to evaluate and reflect on our current plan practices and offer suggestions for improvement. Our AIG Administrative Advisory committee, which consists of principals, central office administrators, AIG Specialists, and regular education teachers also meets throughout the year to evaluate our current AIG plan and provide valuable input into the development of our new plan. Our AIG plan includes a process for yearly documentation, evaluation, and continual monitoring for effectiveness. An annual survey of students, parents, teachers, and administrators and our own departmental self-assessment and goal setting are used to help evaluate the effectiveness of gifted programming. Our rationale for AIG practices is based on this program feedback and self-assessment.

### **Practice B**

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

**District Response:** A successful AIG Plan provides a framework for decision-making and continuous program improvement (Reis 2006) to maintain the integrity and fidelity. An explicit and comprehensive system for monitoring the AIG Plan ensures district-wide equity and excellence. Stakeholders are updated in the progress of implementation via advisory councils and survey results. The Buncombe County Schools AIG Department continues to consistently implement and monitor our local AIG Plan.

Buncombe County Schools' AIG Plan provides a number of strategies to ensure continuous monitoring at the school and system-wide levels. At the school level, records are kept in AIG

Evidence Notebooks to ensure compliance. Standard 1, Practice F and Standard 3, Sources Of Evidence clarify the expected forms for each student folder. Evidence for each standard is documented and maintained in AIG Evidence Notebooks at each school. Notebooks and student records will be audited on a rotational base across the LEA. Audits are performed peer-to-peer as well as by the AIG Lead Facilitators, as needed. At the district level, the Lead AIG Facilitators aid the AIG Staff in program compliance, testing administration, and the implementation of NC AIG standards. The AIG Specialists' PLC meets monthly and monitors the implementation and evaluation of our goals. Interim reports are completed as required and sent to the State Director.

### **Practice C**

Develops and monitors a budget using allotted state funds, and local funds if applicable, to address the needs of the local AIG plan in accordance with state policy.

**District Response:** The General Assembly funds all LEAs and charter schools for AIG programming. In the 2016-17 school year, LEAs received funds based on 4% of Average Daily Membership (ADM) at \$1310.82 per pupil. All LEAs receive these funds regardless of the number of identified AIG students. BCS currently identifies and serves 14.9% of our population according to Spring 2019 State Headcount data. State allocated budget funds must be used for AIG programming purposes according to state policy, and it is the goal of the AIG Coordinator and district leadership that Buncombe County Schools consistently uses state funds appropriately.

Buncombe County Schools Finance Department prepares an annual AIG program budget that ensures proper allocation of funds. Lead AIG Facilitator(s) make recommendations and requests to support the work of AIG Specialists across the district. Directors of Elementary, Intermediate, and Middle Grades Education oversee those requests. Monies are allocated for personnel, materials, and professional development to support the advancement of AIG students. Additionally, the AIG Department financially accepts responsibility for students who are accepted to NC Governor's School via partial or complete tuition support.

### **Practice D**

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

**District Response:** Tracking data relating to AIG student growth and achievement is a critical component of providing exceptional service to advanced learners. Buncombe County Schools conducts a yearly analysis of student performance data from EOG test scores and dropout data. BCS Data Coaches and AIG Lead Facilitators facilitate disaggregation of this data with the AIG department, geographic districts, and individual schools. Data is shared with county-level administrators, individual school administrators, AIG specialists, teachers, and other stakeholders. Growth statistics are used to monitor, develop, and strengthen programs for gifted students. These efforts are ongoing. Parents receive student data via Annual Review documents and quarterly enrichment performance summaries.

Buncombe County Schools' Data Coaches have been instrumental in helping the AIG Department examine the data for AIG students annually, and our department has shared this information with school personnel. The graduating classes of 2012-15 saw over 95% of the AIG students graduate with their four-year cohort. Though this is a strong graduation rate, we continue to disaggregate the data in an attempt to understand the needs of the 5% who were unable to maintain that graduation schedule. Collaboration with other district specialists makes this work possible.

### **Practice E**

Monitors the representation, performance, and retention of under-represented populations in the local AIG program, including students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

**District Response:** Gifted learners from underrepresented populations are often overlooked in gifted programming; therefore, purposeful and consistent monitoring is required to ensure that the potential of those students is recognized, developed, and served. Buncombe County Schools has identification measures in place to target these underrepresented populations (see Standard 1, Practice C), but efforts are also made to monitor their representation, performance, and retention.

AIG Specialists keep an AIG Nomination Database on each campus to track and monitor the nominations received from teachers, parents, and students. This Nomination Database helps to identify trends in both nominations and identifications. As students are identified and entered into PowerSchool, our district maintains an additional county-wide tracking that ensures a checks and balances system can occur. At each headcount submission, AIG Specialists review school data related to race, gender, and ethnicity and provide that data to AIG Lead Facilitators.

Not only are records of underrepresented population representation monitored by AIG Specialists, our SCALE Teams and APT keep data as well. As our SCALE and APT teams carry the responsibility of aiding in the identification of special population students, they also monitor the evidence provided on each student as well as any barriers to placement for our culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional advanced learners.

The AIG Department carefully monitors student identification and AIG Specialist placement trends to ensure that equity is achieved. The Lead AIG Facilitator completes an annual summary of student identification numbers across the entire district, in each community of schools, and in each building and grade level. This data is used to determine AIG Specialist placements and service days allotted to individual schools. Consistent efforts are made to ensure that communities with high populations of diverse learners have a low student to AIG Specialist ratio. This effort provides more time for AIG Specialists assigned to high poverty schools to consider "the skills, attitudes, and values considered important within the individual's cultural group, as well as those measured by standardized tests" as recommended by Castellano and Frazier in *Special Populations in Gifted Education: Understanding Our Most Able Students from Diverse Backgrounds*.

### **Practice F**

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

**District Response:** Gifted learners need teachers and other personnel involved in their education who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and understandings to meet the specialized needs of gifted students. The Buncombe County Schools AIG Department has continuously maintained a database of the credentials of personnel serving AIG students including AIG Specialists, cluster teachers, and AIG licensed personnel.

Buncombe County Schools requires AIG Specialists to be licensed in Gifted Education K-12 or enrolled in current Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) coursework with completion of the program expected within two years. AIG cluster group classroom teachers are required to have Buncombe County Local AIG Credentials, be in the process of obtaining these credentials, or be licensed in NC Gifted Education K-12. Local AIG Credentials Institute courses are offered twice annually in the summer so classroom teachers may develop the skills and knowledge to make effective instructional decisions on behalf of advanced learners. This professional development is free of charge to all BCS educators.

At the individual school level, AIG Specialists maintain documentation of educators who have obtained the BCS Local Credentials or have Gifted Education K-12 licensure. This data is shared annually with administrators and housed onsite in each school's Evidence Notebook. District-wide data is maintained by the Lead AIG Facilitator.

### **Practice G**

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

**District Response:** In order to provide a differentiated education where gifted learners thrive, it is important to gather specific and useful feedback about current services and the needs of groups who support or interact with advanced learners. Survey data from classroom instructors, students, parents, and administrators provides the AIG Department with timely feedback that is used for constant improvement. Buncombe County Schools' AIG Program conducts yearly surveys of students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders to elicit feedback regarding the quality and effectiveness of the local AIG Program. Survey questions are aligned with state standards and provide specific information for monitoring and growth. AIG Specialists maintain a list of parent email addresses and physical addresses in order to assist with communication and surveys. Survey reminders are sent in multiple formats, including School Messenger calls, classroom newsletters, and AIG emails. All communication and surveys are available in multiple languages.

Advisory councils, AIG PLC groups, and SCALE Teams monitor and strengthen services as they provide communication and collaboration about how AIG service delivery. At the school level, each School Committee for Advanced Learning Excellence (SCALE) Team monitors enrichment and extension opportunities available to advanced learners and provides regular feedback to AIG Specialists about the quality and frequency of services available to students on that campus. Feedback is accepted and welcomed at Open House meetings, through parent/AIG Specialist email communication, and on Progress Reports (comments section). This feedback is essential to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the AIG program.

### **Practice H**

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

**District Response:** A successful AIG Program requires continuous review and revisions from all stakeholders to ensure the quality and effectiveness in meeting the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners. Ninety two percent (92%) of administrators agree that BCS facilitates rigorous instruction to accommodate a range of academic intellectual and emotional needs of gifted learners. Eighty percent (80%) of students surveyed indicated that AIG Specialists prepare challenging lessons. Our AIG program is constantly being evaluated and improvements to our program are made as necessary.

The Buncombe County Schools' AIG Plan is reviewed frequently using:

- Surveys of administrators, parents, teachers, and students
- Formative assessments of student understandings
- Student performance tasks, rubrics, and exit tickets
- Summative assessment data (EOGs, EOCs, etc.) reviews
- AIG Headcount data submissions
- Advisory council minutes and agendas

The AIG Department meets at the end of each school year to document accomplishments and set goals for the coming year. Surveys of stakeholders are used to evaluate the program. Goals and targets for district AIG initiatives are set for the following year based on feedback received from the various stakeholders.

### **Practice I**

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

**District Response:** Recognizing that educating our advanced learners is a shared responsibility with all stakeholders, Buncombe County Schools assures that its current AIG Plan is available to all stakeholders. The AIG Plan is downloadable on the BCS district website, housed as hard copies in the AIG district office, and available for download on every AIG Specialist's website. The NC Department of Public Instruction Comments for Local AIG Plans 2019-2022 feedback is submitted to the Superintendent, BCS Board of Education, and our AIG PLC. The NCDPI feedback for improvement is also available for review by all stakeholders upon request. The AIG Department uses this feedback to structure professional development studies, focus initiatives, and improve service delivery methods in Buncombe County.

Additionally, the AIG Department collects and shares a variety of data about student growth and achievement with school personnel to continually monitor and improve the AIG Plan and district services. While no individual student data may be shared with general stakeholders, sharing trends and common patterns in AIG data is encouraged.

BCS AIG collects data from administrators, parents, students, and teachers through yearly surveys; this data is shared with AIG specialists, advisory councils, and administrators and is available to the public on the AIG Department website. Results from the surveys are used to recognize trends and determine goals for our AIG Plan.

### **Practice J**

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

**District Response:** All educators are guided by the NC Teacher Code of Ethics and Buncombe County School Board policies regarding the conduct of teachers, and specific written policies are in place to safeguard the rights of AIG students and their parents/families. Copies of these policies are in the BCS AIG Plan and the AIG Specialist Handbook. These policies include, but are not limited to: identification, placement, reassessment, transfer procedures, and grievance procedures. It is imperative that AIG Staff maintain confidential communication about individually identified learners, appropriate individual services, and information related the families of advanced learners. Seventy-three percent (73%) of parents surveyed said that BCS always or frequently protects the rights of AIG students through policies, procedures, and practices.

Parents must have the ability to dispute identification decisions and gifted service delivery implementation in a manner that is equitable and consistent across Buncombe County. Procedures must be clearly articulated and communicated. If assistance in any AIG matter is required, parents are encouraged to follow this communication pathway in order to receive appropriate support and clarification:

1. Classroom teacher
2. Campus-based AIG Specialist
3. Principal
4. AIG Lead Facilitators
5. Directors of Elementary/Intermediate, Middle Grades, or High School Curriculum

## TRANSFER STUDENT POLICIES

Gifted students who are currently identified in any North Carolina public Local Education Agency maintain their previous AIG identification when transferring into Buncombe County Schools. However, current student performance and assessment data must be reviewed to determine the most appropriate services. A Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) will be created and will govern the services that are available to the student in Buncombe County. The DEP will match the student's

demonstrated needs and BCS service delivery options.

Transfer students identified as gifted in other US states or from private and charter schools with no approved NC AIG Plan must complete the Procedure for AIG Evaluation and meet Buncombe County Schools AIG identification criteria.

#### PROCEDURE TO RESOLVE DISAGREEMENTS

The following procedure should be used by a student's parent/guardian if:

- (1) the parent/guardian disagrees with the decision regarding identification; or
- (2) if the parent/guardian believes that the Differentiated Education Plan for the child who is identified as gifted is not being implemented as written.

#### STEP 1 - SCALE TEAM CONFERENCE

A parent/guardian may make a request in writing to the school principal for a conference with the SCALE Team to discuss concerns about identification decisions and/or implementation of the child's Differentiated Education Plan.

A. The SCALE Team, including the school principal, reviews the student's record and nomination, identification, and service options decision. The committee may gather additional information about the student from teacher(s) and/or the parent/guardian as needed.

B. The SCALE Team grants the conference within five (5) school days of receipt of the request. The SCALE Team responds to the parent/guardian in writing within five (5) school days after the conference indicating the team's decision regarding the dispute.

If the disagreement is not resolved at the SCALE Team conference, then proceed to Step 2.

#### STEP 2 - APPEAL TO THE LEAD ACADEMICALLY/INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED FACILITATOR

A. The parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the school SCALE Team in writing to the Lead AIG Facilitator within five (5) school days of receiving the written response from the school team. The parent/guardian must, in writing, explain concerns, and specific points of disagreement with the school's SCALE decision.

B. The Lead AIG Facilitator (or designee) will convene a panel to review the disagreement within ten (10) school days of receipt of the written Step 2 appeal. This panel will include the superintendent (or designee) and other administrative members at the discretion of the Lead AIG Facilitator.

C. The Lead AIG Facilitator (or designee) will respond to the parent/guardian and principal, in writing, within five (5) school days of the panel review concerning the outcome.

Mediation conducted by school system staff is an option for the parent/guardian at any step in this process. In the event that the local disagreement procedure fails to resolve the disagreement, the

state level disagreement procedure may be requested by the parent/guardian.

### STEP 3 - STATE LEVEL DISAGREEMENT PROCEDURE

A. The parent/guardian may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. This must be done within thirty (30) calendar days of the Lead AIG Facilitator's Panel Review notification. The scope of the review shall be limited to:

- i. whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an Academically/Intellectually Gifted student  
or
- ii. whether the local plan for Academically/Intellectually Gifted Services has been implemented appropriately in regard to the child.

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

C. In the event that the parent/guardian prevails in a due process hearing, Buncombe County Public Schools is not responsible for parent/guardian attorney fees.

### **Ideas for Strengthen the Standard:**

- Post data from the AIG program and evaluation on our district website
- Monitor and consistently provide parents with a copy of rights of gifted students in their native language, including grievance procedures
- Conduct exit interviews with gifted students who have dropped out
- Identify and monitor impacts of identification on our underrepresented populations

### **Sources of Evidence:**

- Buncombe County Schools Gifted Services Plan
- Yearly Gifted Services Plan evaluations
- Survey results from teachers, students, administration, and parents
- Agenda and minutes from meetings with stakeholders
- School based Service Delivery Notebooks
- EOG and EOC data
- Performance Indicator Data (i.e. math assessments, M-Class)
- Ongoing budget records maintained by Lead AIG Facilitators
- AIG headcount
- AIG staff annual reports
- AIG personnel schedules and caseload documentation



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- Student Annual Reviews
- Course selection for high school gifted students
- Dropout data for high school gifted students
- Data regarding referral and identification trends of underrepresented populations
- Enrollment of underrepresented populations in high school honors and AP courses
- Program retention data
- Graduation data
- List of teachers with Gifted Education K-12 License
- List of teachers with AIG Local Credentials
- All credentials of AIG Staff (i.e. MaEd, NBCT)
- Evidences of newsletters, emails, and other forms of parent/specialist communication

**Glossary (optional):**

**Achievement** - Academic achievement is determined by whether or not a student has scored at a level that indicates that he/she consistently demonstrates mastery of the content standards. On North Carolina's End-of-Grade and End-of-Course assessments, students are considered proficient if they score a Level III.

**AP** - Advanced Placement courses give students the chance to tackle college-level work while they're still in high school and earn college credit and placement. In July 2018, the Board of Governors made a score of 3 or higher the standard for receiving AP credit across the 16 universities in the System.

**APT** - Administrative Placement Team, a district-level committee of AIG Specialists from across our LEA, review students for identification if requested by SCALE Teams.

**Aptitude** - Aptitude tests are typically used to measure a student's ability to think, reason, and problem solve in the academic setting.

**BVOA** - Buncombe Virtual Options Academy will allow currently enrolled students, homeschool students, at-risk and homebound students to pursue online instruction.

**CCP** - Career & College Promise (CCP) is North Carolina's dual enrollment program for high school students. This program allows eligible NC high school students to enroll in college classes at North Carolina community colleges and universities through their high school and earn college credit they can take with them after graduation. In many cases, students can also earn dual credit - meeting high school graduation requirements with college courses.

**CDM** - Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) provides the opportunity for students in Buncombe County to personalize and accelerate their learning by earning course credit through a demonstration of course material mastery without the requirement of specific seat time.

**DALGE** - Department of Advanced Learning and Gifted Education - This division of the NCDPI Innovation Department supports the work of each individual district in creating, implementing, and analyzing AIG Plans.

**Differentiation** - Differentiation refers to a wide variety of teaching techniques and lesson adaptations that educators use to instruct a diverse group of students, with diverse learning needs, in the same course, classroom, or learning environment.

**DEP** - Differentiated Education Plan - This plan governs the AIG services that an individual student will receive on an individual school campus.

**Enrichment** - Enrichment includes a variety of learning opportunities that enhance a student's interests and talents through creative and academic exploration. It is: meaningful, substantial, interdisciplinary, connected, and valuable. (DALGE definition)

**Extension** - Extension opportunities include instruction designed to broaden the understanding of a particular standard by adding depth and complexity. (DALGE definition)

**Growth** - Student growth is the amount of academic progress that students make over the course of a grade or class. Regardless of how they enter a grade or course, students can make progress over the course of the school year.

**GRS** - The Gifted Rating Scales are norm-referenced rating scales that support student identification and service matching.

**I-DEP** - Individual Differentiated Education Plan - A student may need an IDEP if he/she has a unique need that cannot be reflected on the standardized DEP service options.

**IHE** - Institute of Higher Education - This acronym is typically used to identify a college, technical school, or university that functions in partnership with an AIG group.

**LEA** - The term Local Education Agency means a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within NC to provide administrative control for public schools serving individuals ages 0 - 21.

**LCI** - Local Credentials Institute - The Buncombe County Schools Local Credential Institute is a free professional development offered to all BCS teachers.

**MTSS** - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support is a multi-tiered framework which promotes school improvement through engaging, research-based academic and behavioral practices. NC MTSS employs a systems approach using data-driven problem-solving to maximize growth for all learners.

**NCDPI** - North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is the state agency that provides leadership and service to the 116 local public-school districts and 2,500+ district public schools, 180+ charter schools, and the three residential schools for students with hearing and visual impairments. The areas of support include curriculum and instruction, accountability, finance, teacher and administrator preparation and licensing, professional development and school business support and operations.

**NCDPI Booster Shots** - Booster Shots are meaningful digital PD sessions that offer direct support for teachers who instruct AIG and advanced learners. School-based AIG Specialists can facilitate these sessions in individual schools.

**NC SCOS** - Based on a philosophy of teaching and learning that is consistent with current research, exemplary practices, and national standards, each content's Standard Course of Study is designed to support North Carolina educators in providing the most challenging education possible for the state's students.

**NCVPS** - The purpose of the North Carolina Virtual Public School is to provide e-learning (online) opportunities to students. The authorizing legislation for NCVPS states: "NCVPS shall be available at no cost to all students in North Carolina who are enrolled in North Carolina's public schools, Department of Defense schools, and schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs."

**SCALE** - Because we recognize that each campus has unique strengths and challenges in meeting the needs of advanced learners, a School Connections for Advanced Learning Excellence (SCALE) Team will help support the opportunities available to advanced learners on each campus. Each SCALE Team will be chaired by the AIG Specialist assigned to that campus.

SIGS - Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) offers an observational instrument that can be used as part of a comprehensive process for identifying gifted children.

Talent Development - Talent Development is a new program for Buncombe County Schools advanced learning 3rd graders who show a need for additional differentiation. While Talent Development is NOT AIG identification, it does support advanced learning needs via a rigorous curriculum and direct service from an AIG Specialist.

**Appendix (optional):**

Appendix A Identification Areas for Advanced Learners 2019-2022.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)

Appendix B Structure of Supports for Advanced Learners.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 2*)

Appendix C 4100-R Early Entry to Kindergarten Adopted 3-7-13.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 2*)

Appendix D Transition to 9-12 Gifted Services.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 5*)

Approval Letter AIG Plan 19-22.pdf (*Local Board Approval Document*)

Appendix E Multiple Measures of Aptitude Achievement and Potential.pdf (*Other Forms*)