



Highline Public Schools Highly Capable Annual Plan, 2020-21

This plan was developed by members of the Teaching, Learning, and Leadership team in spring/summer 2020 in response to the state's annual form package 217 for Highly Capable funding. It is a dynamic document, and will be revised with support of teachers, principals, and families via the Highly Capable Advisory Team, Multi-Disciplinary Committee, and other stakeholder conversations. Revisions will be likely throughout the year based on our current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring us to begin the school year in a distance learning format.

Over the course of the 2019-20 school year, through conversations and survey responses from stakeholders across the system, the following areas have been identified for continued prioritization and development:

- Improve equitable and proportionate identification and services for students across Highline
- Develop and implement a variety of service delivery options for students identified as Highly Capable, including options within general education settings
- Support teachers in general education and self-contained highly capable settings to understand and respond to the unique needs of highly capable learners

This plan is meant to be a comprehensive document that pulls together information shared on the Highline Public Schools website, in communication to schools and families, and in programmatic documents used with teachers and staff. Questions related to any aspect of this plan may be directed to our highly capable team at highlycapable@highlineschools.org.

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Mission, Vision, and Values

In Highline our promise is that each student is known by name, strength, and need, and graduates prepared for the future they choose. We are guided by our Equity Policy which explicitly calls us to be an anti-racist organization. We are committed to providing academic challenge for our students, including those who are meeting and/or exceeding standards, so that they can meet their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally to prepare them for life beyond high school.

To realize this vision, we are building a strong multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and supporting the implementation of personalized learning communities (PLC's) within schools. The primary goal of each PLC is to develop and implement instructional plans informed by four key questions:

1. What do we want all students to know and be able to do?

2. How will we know if they learn it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn?
4. How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

We recognize that each of our students are unique in how they learn and embrace learner variability as an asset that adds value to our classroom communities. We aim to support this variability through Universal Design for Learning (UDL), an approach to instructional planning that offers flexibility in the ways that students access material, engage with it, and show what they know. This approach will benefit learners whether instruction is provided in a traditional or distance learning format.

In the Highline [Strategic Plan](#), we have identified five bold goals supported by a foundation of equity, instruction, relationships, and support. Our goals include:

School Culture: Our schools are welcoming and safe places where students and staff are respected and supported to succeed.

Growth and Mastery: Students will make a minimum of one year of growth annually, meeting or exceeding standards in all grade levels.

Digital and Media Literacy: Students will graduate with the problem solving and critical thinking skills necessary to live and work in a digital world.

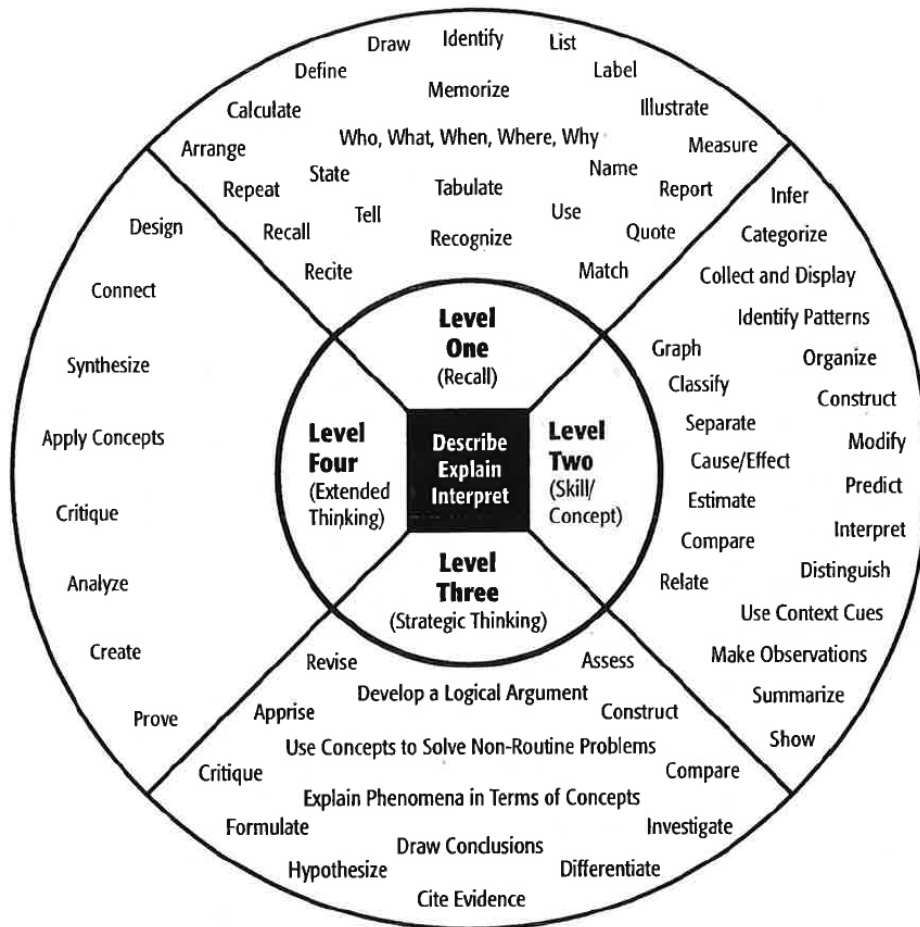
Bilingual and Biliterate: Students will graduate bilingual and biliterate.

High School Graduation: Students will graduate from high school prepared for the future they choose.

As we work to ensure these goals are realized for all students, we are committed to identifying and meeting the needs of our students who are identified as eligible for highly capable services. Highly capable students are “students who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels when compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments.” (WAC 392-170-035)

Rigorous state learning standards, including the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards as well as social emotional competencies, set a high level of expectation for our students aligned with 21st century college and career readiness. Based on input from our Highly Capable Advisory team and our Highly Capable Teaching staff, we have worked to transition the program from one solely focused on acceleration (i.e. learning “above grade level” standards) to one that focuses on helping students achieve greater Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and the habits of learning that we now know make for lifelong learners and contribute to the greatest success in school, college, career, and citizenship.

Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels



We often hear from teachers and families of students served as highly capable that their student “doesn’t try very hard” or “has holes in their learning.” We know from research that this is often the result when we see “gifted” as a static quality and we focus solely on acceleration. We also know from research that students do not learn the same way or at the same rate; furthermore, they may need to approach learning from multiple perspectives and in general, will benefit from focusing on a depth of understanding not just breadth of content.

As such, our intent is to provide balanced opportunities for students to accelerate and extend their learning when appropriate while also achieving a greater depth of knowledge to reach their full potential as scholars. Students should make at least one grade level of growth from their starting point each year, and they should consistently increase capacity to engage independently in extended thinking, synthesizing, proving, critiquing, and creating.

Equity is central tenet of our values. We are committed to ensuring that students who are identified as Highly Capable increasingly reflect the demographics of our district and are continually working to strengthen our identification process to consider as many students as possible. This is not a short-term

strategy. We will continually evaluate and adjust our identification processes as well as our service delivery models in accordance with the [Highline Equity Policy](#) and utilizing the [Highline Equity Lens](#).

Identification Process:

Despite our commitment to equitable identification, our identified students do not yet reflect the diversity of our school district. The chart below illustrates trends in identification over the last five years, specifically for identified students in grades 2 through 8. Our Hispanic, Black, and African American students continue to be underrepresented in our Highly Capable program, as our White and Asian students continue to be overrepresented. This data mirrors trends across the state of Washington.

Highly Capable Grades 2-8 Enrollment

	2015-16 331 students	2016-17 358 students	2017-18 372 students	2018-19 348 students	2019-20 365 students	2020-21 359 students	Highline Public Schools Overall Enrollment
American Indian or Alaska Native	0%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%
Asian	26%	23%	20%	18%	20%	20%	14%
Black or African American	8%	8%	8%	8%	7%	8%	15%
Hispanic	14%	13%	15%	12%	11%	12%	39%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2%	2%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	4%
Two or More Races	8%	7%	6%	7%	7%	5%	6%
White	42%	46%	49%	55%	55%	54%	21%
English Language Learner	3%	4%	6%	7%	12%	17%	28%
Special Education	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	7%	16%

Despite limitations to our identification process due to COVID-19 in the spring of 2020, 114 students were newly identified as eligible for highly capable services for the 2020-21 school year. Using processes developed last year, we were again able to increase our representation of students qualifying for ELL and students with IEPs.

While we are far from our goal of ensuring that our highly capable program represents the student population of Highline Public Schools, we are encouraged by this continued progress. Strategies that will be employed to further equitable identification will include:

- Intentional outreach to staff: We will engage in school-focused outreach to ensure teachers and staff in our underrepresented schools understand qualities of Highly Capable Learners and access the nomination process for students for whom academic measures may not accurately represent a student's capabilities.
- Improved communication to families: We will continue to use electronic communication, available in families' home language, using platforms with which families are already familiar. Additionally, we are working to ensure that staff members at each school are well equipped to provide information to families with whom they have relationships.
- Updated measures for screening/identification: iReady data provides helpful information not only about student performance, but about rate of growth. This can provide valuable information about the learning capabilities of our students. Similarly, data around language acquisition rates provides another valuable perspective on the strengths of our English Language Learners.

Finally, we will continue to use the Highline Equity Lens to interrogate and improve our identification process in service of racial equity. We commit to acting on our growing awareness of institutional bias that negatively affects our students of color, and to developing and implementing opportunities for all Highline students to engage in challenging and relevant learning opportunities.

Notification

Families are notified about highly capable programs in several ways:

- Our district website is regularly updated with the most current information on our Highly Capable programming, identification process, and relevant timelines. If specific dates for the current school year are not yet available, timeframes are provided during which families can expect additional details.
- A communication is sent via our electronic newsletter platform, School Messenger, to families of all students in grades K-7 notifying them of the highly capable program and our process for testing and identification. This communication is not sent to students who will be in High School settings the following year because almost all HPS students have been screened multiple times and have received our notification letter in earlier grades. This communication is sent approximately one month prior to the start of any testing and is translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Somali.
- School based staff and district social media are also sources of information for families.

Screening/Referrals

To provide equitable opportunities for students in Highline, all students in grades K, 1, and 2 in HPS are screened for Highly Capable services. We believe this process is critical in the early years because of the

rapid and variable brain development in young children. We also recognize that intelligence does not always present itself in traditional ways in early grades, especially for students for whom English may not be a first language and those without access to early learning experiences. This universal screening is the basis of our talent development model.

Students in any grade (including K-2) may be nominated for consideration for Highly Capable services by their parent/guardian, teacher, principal, other staff member, other students, or a community member by calling or e-mailing the Teaching, Learning and Leadership department at any time prior to the beginning of the testing/identification process each year. If a student is nominated and their grades/test scores are generally proficient, she/he is automatically included in the full testing/identification process.

In grades 3 and higher, a student may also be nominated for the program by a school based MTSS team after a review of assessment data, evidence of learning, and/or consideration of other highly capable attributes. Our Multi-Disciplinary Selection Committee also reviews available student data for students in grades 3-7, inviting students exhibiting strong performance to participate in our full identification process.

Screening Procedures

The following data points are considered as a part of our first phase of identification (screening).

	iReady Assessment	CogAT 7 Screener	SBA	ELPA21	Common classroom-based assessments, when available
K	X			X	X
1-2	X	X		X	X
3-7	X		X	X	X
8-12	X*		X	X	X

**iReady is administered for selected students only in grades 9-12*

In this initial screening phase, we look at the confluence of data about students using very broad criteria when determining who to bring in for additional testing, based on the recommendations of the Multi-Disciplinary Selection Committee. Determinations are informed by consistently high performance across measures, as well as significant areas of rapid growth.

About the assessments:

- The iReady assessment is our district adopted growth measurement tool and is administered two to three times each year English Language Arts and Mathematics. The assessment focuses on student mastery of and growth in state learning standards.
- The CogAT 7 Screener is a test that all 1st and 2nd grade students take each year that provides information regarding cognitive processing speed, verbal reasoning, and non-numeric problem-solving skills. This data is used to build a more complete picture of a student and help identify areas of strength and need that may not yet be evident in traditional academic assessments.

- The SBA (Smarter Balanced Assessment) is a state-required assessment used to gauge students' proficiency on grade-level standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The SBA is administered each spring beginning in 3rd grade.
- The ELPA21 is a state-required assessment of students' English-language proficiency. It is given in the spring each year to students identified in last year's ELPA testing, during our intake/registration with the school district, or students identified by teachers as needing additional support to learn English.
- Classroom/unit assessments - Unit assessments are provided as part of the standard curriculum in math and literacy. Additional classroom formative assessments are ongoing observations that happen informally at several points throughout each day and may include on-demand writing tasks, Fountas and Pinnell Reading assessments, and student presentation of work.

Assessment and Selection

Students participating in Phase 2 of our identification process then participate in the full CogAT 7. This assessment has three sections: Verbal, Quantitative and Nonverbal. This assessment gives us more information about students' cognitive processing ability in areas that inform literacy, math, and general problem-solving.

After all assessment data are collected, the Multidisciplinary Selection Committee (MSC) meets in the spring to review the data and collection of evidence to make recommendations for identification as Highly Capable eligibility for highly capable services. There is a significantly higher bar for assessment results in the selection phase than in the screening phase. We seek to get a full understanding of student strengths and may reach out to teachers when we have questions about the available data. In 2013-2014, the Multi-Disciplinary Selection Committee reviewed four of the most-used teacher rating scales that are available and found them all to be subject to significant bias. In 2017-18, we incorporated a characteristic inventory, completed by teachers and families, as a supporting piece of data to help us better understand the individual learner, but also found limitations with this tool.

The MDC is comprised of people who hold the following roles and backgrounds in the district: central office administrators, curriculum and instruction directors, special education team members, school counselors and/or psychologists, principals in schools with highly capable programs, and teachers of students who are identified as highly capable.

Caregiver permission to test and beginning services

As soon as students are nominated for phase 2 of our process, families are contacted via email. This message provides information about the program and testing process and includes directions for opting their student out of additional testing. Messages are translated as needed into in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Cambodian, and Somali.

For all students who do participate in phase 2 of our process, a letter is sent home informing the family of whether the student has been determined to be eligible for highly capable services. In some cases, based on capacity of the program, students may be placed on a waitlist for services. For students identified as eligible for services, families must return a form that indicates their desire to accept the services. They can return this form by mail, by dropping off at the school or district office, or by informing us by e-mail. The letter has been translated into Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, and Cambodian.

Services to Identified Students

We strive to provide educational opportunities that consider each student's strengths and needs. At its best, instruction should be personalized, data-driven, and strength-based. Our services in Kindergarten and 1st grade are provided in the student's home school/classroom, with teachers providing extensions during literacy and math blocks.

Our services in grades 2-8 include a magnet program we call "Challenge" which is located at two elementary schools and two middle schools. An additional option of a Highly Capable Learning Plan (HCLP) is available for students in grades 2-5. This option allows students to receive services in their home school, in a general education classroom setting. Highly Capable program and differentiation specialists will assist teachers and school teams in developing and implementing student programming. New for 2020-21 is Earned Honors as a service delivery option for 6th graders. This builds on the elementary HCLP and allows students to receive highly capable services in their home school. This service option will roll up to 7th and 8th grades over the next two years.

Our services in high school include intentional course pathways that continue students' accelerated trajectory toward success in college-like coursework (AP, IB, Running Start and College in the High School). Students will be encouraged to take these college-like courses as early as possible in high school, while still engaging in foundational courses to fulfill graduation and academic program requirements, and continue the learning trajectory by taking the highest-level courses available either at their school or at local colleges through Running Start.

Program Components:

Literacy

- Our highly capable services use a balanced literacy model which combines a focus on grade level standards as well as activities specific to the students' individual level of reading and writing.
- Our teachers utilize instructional frameworks and the Lucy Calkins reading/writing units of study. These research-based units enable teachers to push students along a progression of learning that results in a high level of cognitive challenge and Depth of Knowledge.
- In the Challenge program (2-8), there is a strong focus on interdisciplinary projects with Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics collaborating on high-level, rigorous projects that push students to think critically and creatively and express their understanding through multiple types of written and oral expressions, operating in the highest levels of Depth of Knowledge. Teachers who support students identified as highly capable who are not in the Challenge program are encouraged to provide opportunities for rigorous interdisciplinary thinking as well, supported by HPS instructional frameworks.

Math

- Our highly capable curriculum in grades 2-6 is aligned to state learning standards. Students may be exposed to content above grade level beyond grade level when appropriate, but our priority will continue to be depth of understanding of grade level content to ensure success in advanced courses later in the student's academic career.

- In grades 7-8. Math course placement is determined based on individual student readiness and need, based on assessment data with teacher and family input. We again prioritize depth of understanding over acceleration of content.

Professional learning opportunities for teachers of students identified as highly capable is focused on building deep understanding of the state learning standards so they can identify when students are approaching standard, proficient on the standard, and above standard, as well as building their understanding of units, lessons, and activities that move students from Depth of Knowledge levels 1 and 2 where they are simply learning facts and basic skills into levels 3 and 4 where they can think strategically, analyze across ideas, solve complex problems in multiple ways, and prove points using knowledge gained at different times and in different ways. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is also a priority to honor learner variability and address barriers that may arise for students. Additionally, a focus on Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) enables teaching teams to work together to answer key questions, including “How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?”. Finally, targeted professional learning opportunities will be provided for teachers in general education and highly capable settings around understanding and responding to the unique needs of highly capable learners.

Evaluation

To meet our goals of excellence and equity for students identified as highly capable, it is critical that we engage in robust program evaluation. We believe that students receiving highly capable services should master, not just be proficient in, grade-level state learning standards. This would mean they are performing at a “distinguished” level of Depth of Knowledge (level 4), whereas most students who are on grade level would perform at “proficient” or level 3.

Our iReady and Smarter Balanced Assessments are the best indicator of that growth and performance, and the data are reviewed each summer/fall for students receiving highly capable services. Annual surveys are also administered each spring to students, families, and staff involved with highly capable programming, allowing for valuable information around learning and growth areas that are often harder to measure via traditional assessments.

The other critical factor that we evaluate is equity of services. State law requires us to “review identification procedures to make sure student selection reflects the demographics of the area they serve.” While some progress has been made over the last several years, we are far from achieving proportionate representation across student groups. Identification strategies described throughout this annual plan are aligned with our commitment to continued improvement in this area, and our system-wide commitment to becoming an anti-racist school district.