

## WCS AIG Plan 2025-2028

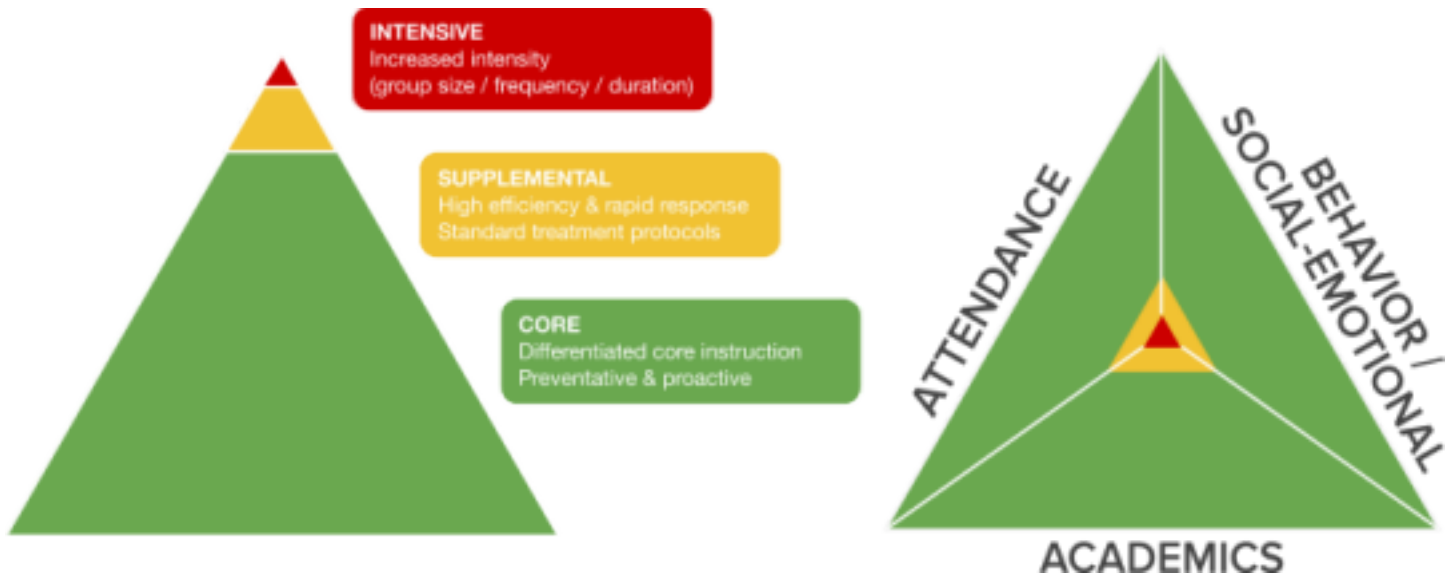
### Appendix D: Academically / Intellectually Gifted Services in a Multi-Tiered System of Supports

This document is not intended to be a comprehensive discussion of gifted education within the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework. However, it provides some considerations of how gifted education is integrated within MTSS to guide collaboration among the total school community.

#### What is a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)?

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction defines a multi-tiered system of supports as a “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” (n.d).

A multi-tiered system of supports includes all educators working to provide the necessary supports for all students across and between the domains of academics, attendance, behavior, and social-emotional needs. MTSS includes six key components: leadership, data-based problem solving, data evaluation, a three-tiered model of instruction and intervention, building capacity and infrastructure for implementation, and communication and collaboration.



#### How are an MTSS and gifted education mutually supportive?

A well-functioning MTSS empowers educators to regularly collect student data, analyze it to determine strengths and needs, and respond by creating the appropriate supports for each student. This is the same purpose and process of gifted education: use available data to identify students who have a specific need -- i.e. advanced differentiation -- and provide services tailored to student strengths and needs. MTSS provides a framework of teaming structures, data discussion protocols, and other processes that directly support gifted education.

The Facilitated Assessment of MTSS -- School Level (also known as the FAM-S) is a self-assessment rubric describing ideal MTSS implementation. The following information from the FAM-S describes areas in which gifted education is integrated within an MTSS framework:

- Schools identify and allocate resources to support MTSS implementation (p. 17), which includes not just monetary funds supporting AIG programming, but more importantly, AIG Specialists, classroom teachers, School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Social Workers, and any other professionals who support the academic and/or social-emotional needs of gifted learners.
- Educators use and act on data according to specific decision rules (p. 16) to “[ensure] optimal learning opportunities for all sub-groups of students” (p. 10), including the AIG subgroup;
- Educators across a school have shared understanding of effective, research-based core academic practices -- i.e. instruction that happens in every classroom. These include culturally responsive instruction; high student engagement; clearly defined curriculum sequence, goals, and resources; flexible grouping strategies; and awareness of and deliberate attention to the impact of behavior and social-emotional needs on academic performance (p. 29). All of these core academic practices have direct correlations in the NC AIG Program Standards and thus in the WCS AIG Plan.
- As part of the three-tiered instruction/intervention model, educators provide supplemental academic practices that are linked to core instruction and rely on the same best educational practices, including cultural responsiveness, well-defined sequencing and goals, flexible groupings, and consideration of social-emotional needs (p. 32). For gifted students, the AIG services they receive from AIG Specialists and other members of the total school community are one form of supplemental academic support, offering opportunities for greater engagement beyond what core academics may provide.

### **How is gifted education integrated with team structures within an MTSS framework?**

At the school and district levels, specific teams lead the implementation and monitoring of MTSS. These may be referred to as MTSS Teams or may operate under other titles, such as School Improvement Teams. Regardless of label, these teams incorporate “cross-disciplinary representation” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019, p. 2); at the district level, this includes the District AIG Coordinator, and schools should include AIG Specialists on their corresponding teams.

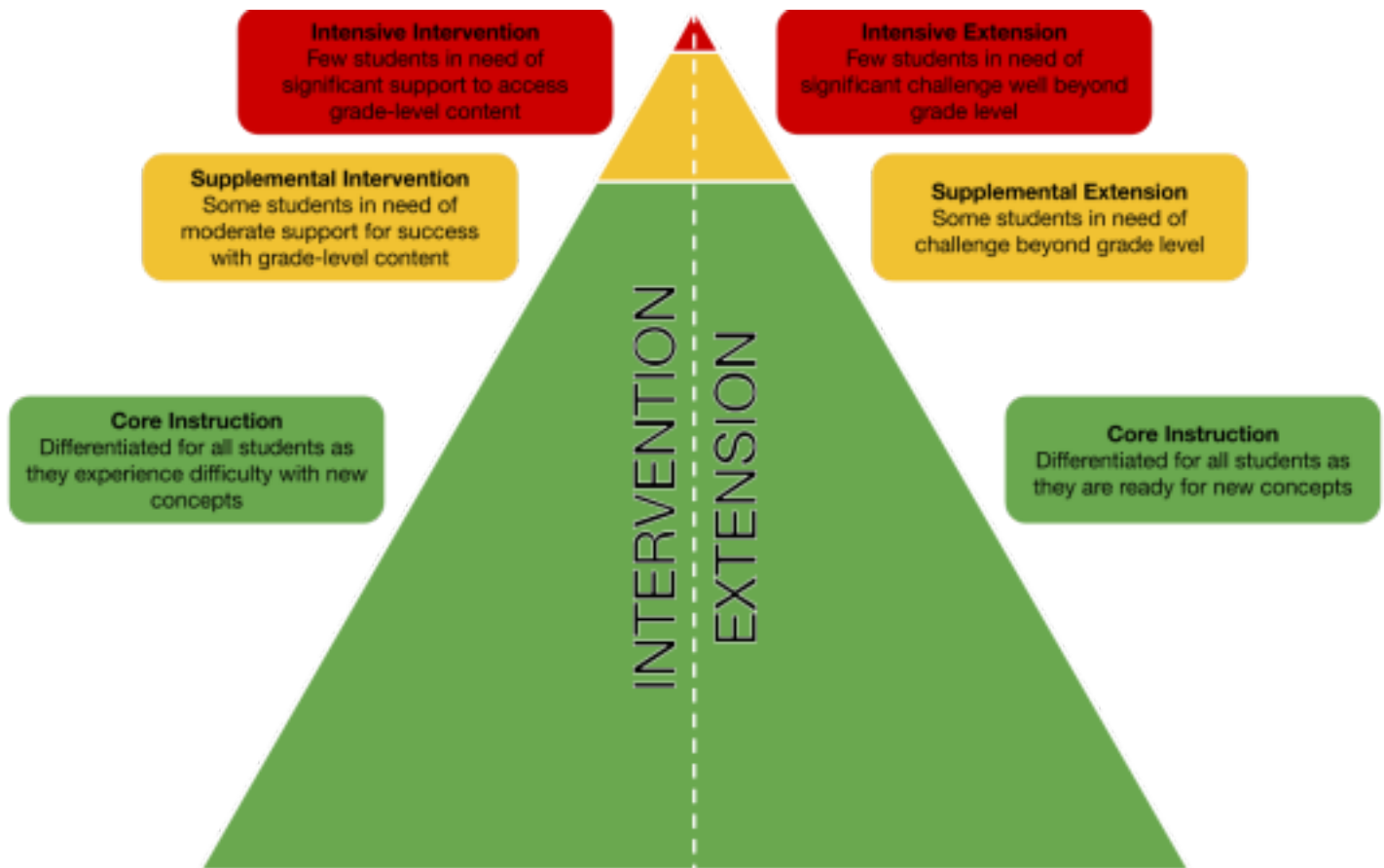
MTSS implementation led by district- and school-level teams is further supported and informed by two-way collaboration with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teams of educators with a common grade level, subject area, or other like role who “work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve” (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016, p. 10). Through these collaborative, data-informed conversations, PLCs seek to answer four questions:

1. What do we want students to know and be able to do?
2. How do we know they are learning?
3. What do we do when they’re not learning?
4. How do we respond when they’ve already learned the information? (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012, p. 5)

The fourth question of PLCs directly relates to gifted education. It is through these conversations that we consider what our most advanced learners need in order to stay engaged and continue to grow academically. To support these conversations, AIG Specialists should be regularly and actively involved in the work of PLCs in their schools.

## What are the roles of enrichment and extension within an MTSS?

The three-tiered model of instruction and intervention provides a framework for supplemental and intensive supports provided in addition to core instruction. These supports are often discussed in terms of intervention -- i.e. supports provided to students struggling to learn grade-level content (as considered through the third question of PLCs). However, in response to the fourth question of PLCs, these tiered supports also meet the needs of gifted learners through enrichment and extension.



*Diagram adapted from the Morning Star Elementary School MTSS Handbook, section 2 and Buffum, Mattos, & Malone, 2018, p. 28*

It is essential that an MTSS support both struggling and advanced learners: “interventions should not be focused exclusively on struggling students, nor should [academic interventions] come at the cost of students already learning on or above grade level” (Buffum, Mattos, & Malone, 2018, p. 29). Just as schools purposefully schedule time, personnel, and other available resources to support students struggling to learn, they must also do so for gifted learners.

## What should be the relationship between intervention and AIG service delivery?

Once a student is identified as gifted, we have a legal obligation (as specified in Article 9B of the NC General Statutes) to provide services. AIG students cannot be denied gifted services or have gifted identification removed for any reason, including an evident need for intervention. However, gifted services do not necessarily always have to be only enrichment or extension. It is entirely appropriate to take a needs-based approach with our AIG students in addition to serving their strengths.

For example, consider a student who is identified as Academically Gifted in Math (AM), and a recent diagnostic assessment tells us this student needs intervention on a particular domain of the Math standards. It is in this student's best interest for us to take a balanced approach where we provide strength-based services (e.g. enrichment, extension, etc) in the student's areas of mastery while also intervening on the evident need.

Intervention and enrichment for AIG students is not a matter of battle, but of balance -- what the NC AIG Standards and WCS AIG Plan refer to as student-service match and integration in the total school community.

### **When can interventions occur for AIG students, and who can provide them? How does this impact enrichment and extension for AIG students?**

MTSS best practices recommend interventions be provided by any professional (e.g. a classroom teacher, specialist, teacher assistant) who is trained to deliver that specific intervention with fidelity. Therefore, an AIG student in need of intervention could...

- ...receive intervention as part of a group during I/E time from someone who is not the AIG Specialist;
- ...receive intervention from the AIG Specialist (assuming the specialist has been trained in the intervention) during their AIG service delivery time.

In either case, we must ensure the other aspects of the student's Differentiated Education Plan are still fulfilled. This might happen during intervention and enrichment (I/E) time on other days; for example, if the AIG Specialist sees the student three times a week during I/E, then perhaps Monday is an intervention day and Wednesday/Friday are enrichment days (or potentially vice versa according to the severity of the need). It could also mean a schedule adjustment for that student where rather than seeing the student during I/E, we now do some amount of pull-out service delivery.

### **How does receiving intervention impact AIG documentation?**

Documentation of intervention for AIG students should be the same as any other student receiving intervention. In terms of AIG program documentation, no immediate changes are necessary to a student's Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP). The fluid and relatively rapid nature of interventions could make continuous paperwork changes counterproductive. If, in the process of providing interventions, we identify supports that benefit an AIG student and will be kept in place long-term, then these should be documented on the DEP/IDEP at the next annual review.