



**New Hanover County Schools**

*Engaging Students, Achieving Excellence.*

**Local AIG Plan  
2025-2028**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>New Hanover County Schools</b> <b>Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Plan</b> <b>Effective 2025-2028</b></p>
---

### **AIG Plan Revision Overview**

**Approved by Local Board of Education on:** June 3, 2025

**LEA Superintendent's Name:** Dr. Christopher Barnes

**LEA AIG Contact Name:** Dr. Lo DeWalt

**Submitted to NC Department of Public Instruction on:** **ANTICIPATED June 6, 2025**

New Hanover County Schools has developed this local AIG plan based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBOE, July 2024 ). These standards serve as a statewide framework and guide Public School Units (PSUs) to develop, implement, and monitor thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs. The NC AIG Program Standards encompass six principle standards with accompanying practices. They articulate the expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs aligned to NC's AIG legislation, Article 9B (N. C. G. S. 115C150.5). These best practices help to clarify the standard, describe what a PSU should have in place, and guide PSUs to improve their programs. In an effort to continue to transform AIG programs and align to the NC AIG Program Standards, each PSU has participated in a review process of their local AIG program, involving multiple stakeholders.

The data gathered during this process to review our previous NHCS AIG plan has guided NHCS in our development of this local AIG plan for 2025-2028. This local AIG plan has been approved by the LEA's local board of education sent to NC DPI for comment.

2025-2028 AIG Plan Committee Team Members:

- Committee Chair
  - Dr. Lo DeWalt - Director Curriculum and Instruction
- Committee Members
  - Jen Crudeli - High School Gifted Education Specialist
  - Christina Daniels - Elementary Gifted Education Specialist & GAC member
  - Dr. Jean Hall - Supervisor of Specialty Programs
  - Kendra Harrison - Assistant Principal Hoggard High School & GAC member
  - Deanna Leake - Principal Murray Middle School
  - Jackson Norvell - Principal Wrightsville Beach Elementary
  - Dr. Jamie Pond - NHCS Gifted Advisory Council Chair, UNCW Professor
  - Lindsay Wescoe - Elementary Gifted Education Specialist
  - Diana Woodlock - Middle School Gifted Education Specialist

## NHCS AIG Mission and Vision Statement

Of the many definitions of giftedness, no single definition is universally agreed upon. In North Carolina it is accepted that "academically or intellectually gifted students" exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both intellectual areas and specific academic fields. Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor." (North Carolina. Gen. Stat. § 115C-150.5) New Hanover County Schools wholeheartedly echoes this definition adopted by our state.

The Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted program in New Hanover County is structured to ensure access for all gifted students and therefore considers multiple factors and data points when assessing students during the nomination and identification process. Instruction and program development is designed to align with the individual needs of our gifted students. With the continual evolution of content and skills, rigorous and relevant curriculum is an important component to the growth of advanced learners. It is our duty to create an environment in which our gifted students can flourish. It is also our duty to educate parents, the community, and educators that work directly with gifted learners about their characteristics, social and emotional needs, and the resources available to ensure their success. Through research based identification practices, challenging and differentiated curriculum, ongoing professional development, comprehensive programming, partnerships, and transparent accountability, our district will continue to build a program for gifted students that will not only prepare them for college and career, but create a desire for continual growth and community involvement. New Hanover County Schools recognizes and supports the need for gifted programming and continued advocacy for gifted student rights to an outstanding education.

The purpose of the AIG plan is to ensure services for the academically and/or intellectually gifted students that perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. Academically and/or intellectually gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both intellectual areas and specific academic fields. Academically and/or intellectually gifted students require differentiated education services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program. Advanced abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata and in all areas of human endeavor.

### FUNDING FOR LOCAL AIG PROGRAM (as of April 2025 )

State funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other funding
\$2,471,367.71	\$1,396,856.64	\$0.00	NC Advanced Placement Partnership offers stipends and covers AP teacher training directly. At this time we are unsure about funding based on the current legislative session.

# 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 both screening and referral processes that lead to AIG identification at all grade levels. Provides opportunities, including universal screening, for every student to show their strengths and talents.*

**District Response:** While screening and referrals occur in all grade levels K- 12, New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) has developed a universal screening process in the third grade with every third grade student participating in a screening assessment. One of the goals of the screening process is to find students who may not be referred through traditional nomination processes. Universal screening ensures we are identifying all gifted students, including those who may have strong cognitive abilities, but are not performing as well academically. NHCS has selected to use the COGAT (Cognitive Abilities Test) as our universal screening assessment.

**In grades K-3,** the Gifted Education Specialist (GES) provides nurturing lessons to all K-3 students using research based critical thinking materials. To support screening and referrals, the GES and classroom teacher observe and collect data on K-3 students using the Gifted Student Ratings Scale (GSRS), PETS observational tool, and the Kingore Observation Inventory (KOI). The K-3 observational data assists in the screening process in finding students who are performing or demonstrating the potential to exhibit substantially high levels of accomplishment. The K-3 observational data is used by the school's AIG identification team, "the Match Team", when students are referred for Academic or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) consideration and when developing a school Talent Pool.

**In grades 4-8,** student screening considerations are ongoing using North Carolina End-of-Grade (NC EOG) data, county benchmark data, classroom formative assessments, and classroom academic performance. Data review is ongoing and students showing potential are added to the Talent Pool and considered for AIG nomination/referral.

**In grades 9-12,** student screening considerations are ongoing using North Carolina End-of-Course (NC EOC) data, Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) data, PreACT data, PSAT data, Disaggregated GPA data, and classroom formative data.

**Referral/Nomination:** Students scoring in the top ten percent at their assigned school or in the 90th percentile or higher on the 3rd grade screening assessments will automatically be added to the Talent Pool and considered for AIG nomination. Based on school demographics, GES are encouraged to broaden their search to review the top 15% of each grade-level. Students with strong observational data or artifacts will also be considered for AIG nomination/referral. GES will collaborate with multilingual education teachers to recognize students who are acquiring language quickly or exiting from services at a rapid pace as measured by the WIDA ACCESS assessment.

We believe students show talents in many ways and at different times, therefore AIG nominations for NHCS students may occur at any time or grade level. Referrals are accepted from teachers, parents/guardians, peers, principals, counselors, community members, and self-nominations. AIG nomination/referral forms are located on the district AIG website and on each school's AIG website. Printed copies are also available at each school. Upon receipt of a

completed nomination form, the GES must date and sign the form and then start the referral process. Students with strong observational data or artifacts may also be considered for AIG nomination. Students may be referred to the gifted program at any time.

The site Match Team meets to discuss the collected data and make decisions for every nominated student. If a nomination is received after the district testing windows for the school year, the GES will still start the process and the referral/nomination will continue at the beginning of the next school year when additional data can be collected. These students are included on the end of year transition documents that are shared with feeder schools.

Students who have been retained and are nominated for AIG will be assessed using age appropriate testing and norms instead of current grade level.

Students must be enrolled in NHCS to be referred/nominated for gifted services.

---

## **Practice B**

*Establishes a process and criteria for AIG student identification at all grade levels, K-12, that provides multiple opportunities to reveal a student's aptitude, achievement, or potential to achieve. The criteria may include both qualitative and quantitative data in order to develop a comprehensive learner profile.*

**District Response:** NHCS employs three criteria for AIG Identification: aptitude, achievement, and artifacts. These three pillars are used to screen and identify students for gifted services in grades K-12. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data is used to build a body of evidence to support gifted identification decisions. NHCS uses the definitions set by the National Association for Gifted Children.

**Aptitude:** An inclination to excel in the performance of a certain skill.

**Aptitude Test:** A test predicting a student's future performance in a particular domain. One such test is the SAT test.

- *NHCS uses COGAT as a universal screening Aptitude test.*
- *We also have the Naglieri General Abilities Test - NNAT.*

**Achievement:** Academic skill level attained by the student after being taught.

**Achievement Test:** A test designed to measure what students have already learned, mostly in specific content areas. An example of an achievement test is the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS).

- *NHCS uses multiple achievement tests for identification including ITBS, ACT, PSAT, SAT, Advance Placement and IB Exams, and state achievement testing such as the EOG and EOC for grades 3-12.*

**Artifacts** are a collection of evidence used in the screening and identification process.

Artifacts may include qualitative and quantitative data that provide evidence of aptitude or achievement:

- Observable Behaviors checklists (TOPS, KOI, GSRS, etc.)
  - Parent and Teacher checklists both fall under this artifact
- Student Interviews
- Student work samples
- Student extracurricular samples (contests, competitions, awards, etc.)
- Classroom or county-wide assessments
- Statewide assessments (NCCI, EOG, EOC, etc.)

- National assessments (SAT, ACT, PreACT, IB, Advanced Placement, etc.)

**Identification Process:** Match Teams at each school will make the decisions for gifted identification based on multiple data points and submitted artifacts. Students can be identified as intellectually gifted (IG), academically gifted (reading and/or math), or both academically and intellectually gifted (AIG). To be identified as AIG, students must meet a pathway for both IG and AG as seen below.

The pathways guide the match team process, but are not a guarantee of identification. Match teams should also take into consideration data from the top 15% of a grade level to screen for potentially gifted students who do not yet meet the pathways below.

### **Aptitude Pathway for Identification in IG**

1. Composite score 90th percentile or above on a nationally normed aptitude test
2. Nonverbal aptitude score at or above 95 percentile

### **Achievement Pathways for Identification in AG (Math or Reading)**

1. Subtest score 90th percentile or above on a nationally normed achievement test in math/reading
2. EOG/EOC achievement score at or above 95 percentile in math/reading
3. Top 10% of grade level peers within the school site

### **Pathway for Identification in AIG**

1. Students whose match team identify them for both intellectual and academic giftedness pathways

### **Transfer Student AIG Identification:**

Any student who transfers with evidence of identification in a program for academically or intellectually gifted students will be reviewed to match identification area and service options. NHCS will honor AIG identification from other NC districts. It is our goal to appropriately match student services using available data and demonstrated need. Parents are always informed of the process and Match Team decisions.

AIG students who transfer from within the LEA or another NC LEA:

1. Data manager notifies gifted specialist of gifted transfer student
2. GES will review the transfer student's gifted program participation data, document all available data on the Match Team Record, and share the data with the site's match team
3. The site's match team will review the data and determine appropriate service delivery options
4. Gifted specialist will document the site's match team decisions

Students who transfer with evidence of AIG identification from out of state will be reviewed to ensure identification meets the LEA criteria. If criteria evidence is lacking the nomination process may be started. Services should meet the student's demonstrated needs as decided by the Match Team during the nomination process. NHCS does our best to avoid "un-gifting" a student who was previously identified.

AIG students who transfer from another state:

1. Data manager notifies gifted specialist of transfer student who has evidence of

- participation in a gifted program
2. The GES will contact the parents/guardian to explain the transfer process
  3. GES will review the transfer student's AIG program participation and record data on the Match Team Record and share the data with the site's match team
  4. The site's match team will review the data and determine if criteria meets NHCS AIG identification guidelines or if it is reasonable to maintain the student's gifted status.
  5. The site's match team will create a Differentiated Education Plans, or DEP, that addresses the identification area(s) and service delivery options. Regardless of identification, the site's Match Team should make a recommendation for service options during the nomination process based on the student's demonstrated needs if the child was receiving gifted services.
  6. If the match team does not believe the child is a fit for the gifted program. The GES or school administrator should contact the Director of Curriculum and Instruction to discuss "un-gifting" a child. If that decision is made, the school administration notifies the parents/guardians and shares next steps to meet the child's needs.
  7. GES will document the site's match team decisions on the Match Team Record

#### Transfer Students from Private Schools:

1. GES meets with data manager to generate a list of NHC private school transfer students (preferably at the beginning of the school year)
2. GES will collect and review data of transfer students
3. GES will take collected data of transfer students who potentially show the need for AIG services to the site based Match Team.
4. Match team reviews data and decides on either AIG nomination, identification, and/or AIG service needs

Transfer or other students with additional data: Testing data submitted to the match team must be on the 'NHCS AIG Approved Tests/Instruments' list. Any additional data can help build a body of evidence to support identification and can be considered by the match team. A qualifying achievement or aptitude test score must be at least one year current to be considered for identification purposes.

---

### 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, multilingual learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.*

**District Response:** NHCS utilizes AIG practices that respond to traditionally underrepresented populations in gifted programming. NHCS AIG program strives to provide equal opportunity and access to all students. NHCS AIG program strives to have each school's program reflect the demographics of its population and therefore the LEA AIG program will better reflect LEA demographics.

Gifted Specialists work closely with other departments and resource staff in the schools to ensure opportunities for all students. For example, Gifted Specialists work with multilingual education teachers (ML) teachers to review ACCESS testing data and other indicators of rapid

language acquisition to ensure equal opportunity for multilingual students. To better identify and serve twice exceptional students, GES should collaborate with their special education teachers on an on-going basis. It is a minimum expectation that the GES at each site connect with the ML and Special Education teachers at least 3x a year to discuss services for identified students and to discuss students who have the potential for identification.

In our Title I schools the GES may provide more intentional talent development in efforts to increase opportunities for underrepresented or economically disadvantaged populations. The goal of these efforts is to increase referrals of underrepresented populations that lead to AIG identification. Ongoing collaboration should occur with school leadership, social workers, counselors, bilingual parent liaisons, and other community stakeholders to gain feedback on our program. This also helps us to bridge communication between the AIG Program and home to ensure parents have adequate access to information, services, and support.

Highly gifted children and adolescents (IQ of 145+ (+/-2) or greater or 99 percentile or above on an aptitude composite test) need specific differentiation. According to the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), the highly gifted student appears in the population at a ratio of 1 in 1,000. The comprehensive nature of the NHCS AIG screening, referral, and identification procedures includes standards to identify and respond to the needs of highly gifted students. Identification of highly gifted K-2 students who are demonstrating consistent abilities two years above grade level are handled on an individual case basis. Based on a body of evidence, the school Match Team will create a long term plan of action to address the student's needs. The plan will include advanced instruction and ongoing progress monitoring. Documented evidence must show the advanced support the student has been given in the classroom and by the GES. The Director of Curriculum & Instruction must attend Match Team meetings in regards to K-2 student screening, referral, and identification of highly gifted K-2 students.

Classroom teachers are expected to remain in the classroom to observe and record gifted characteristics and traits of individual students during K-3 nurturing lessons. The classroom teachers and gifted specialists collaborate during K-3 Nurturing to collect observable data on all students. Analysis of observable data allows the classroom teacher and the gifted specialist to provide research based critical thinking lessons to all students. Often culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, MLs, highly gifted, and twice exceptional students will show potential in these lessons while they may not in traditional academic lessons. NHCS third grade aptitude screener enables the collection of aptitude data on all students including underrepresented populations of students who might not otherwise be nominated for AIG. In addition, gifted specialists ensure that by third grade all students have had the opportunity to show advanced thinking skills using researched based critical thinking lessons to collect work samples for nomination consideration.

The qualitative data collected during the K-3 lessons is used when developing a talent pool in consideration for the gifted program. The talent pool is a list of students who have demonstrated potential. It is generated each year using available district and state assessments, as well as individual student performance data to ensure that all students are intentionally reviewed for advanced needs. Ideally, school AIG nomination data should match the whole school demographic data. Our district is working diligently to decrease the disparities in demographic data and to ensure that all gifted students are identified and served regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, or twice-exceptionalities. Our goal is to ensure all gifted students have access to highly qualified GES, services in their building, and appropriate differentiation to meet their academic and intellectual needs.

## Practice D

*Monitors the screening, referral, and identification processes for consistent implementation across the LEA.*

**District Response:** Processes and procedures have been created in NHCS to ensure the consistent implementation of AIG identification practices. GESs attend monthly training for continual updates, reviews, and implementation of our gifted program policies, processes, and procedures.

Each school maintains a trained AIG Match Team to review all data to make decisions and match service options with student needs. Each GES is required to use the district match team training presentation for annual match team training. Each site's match team members sign an attestation to document completion of training. The match team documents all meetings and decisions on the "Match Team Record" which is kept in the student's Module II file. In order for a match team decision to be reached the following, at a minimum, must be present: GES, School Administrator or designee, and grade/content teacher.

GESs log match team meetings on a district spreadsheet that records meeting dates, members present, and decisions made. All testing decisions, excluding third grade universal screening, are made by the school match team and documented on the Match Team Record.

In addition, the district uses the following screening, referral, and identification documents for consistent implementation across all schools:

- **Match Team Decisions and Guidelines** - This chart has information on beginning of the year practices, links to the required training and attestations, guidelines for initial nominations and transfers, processes for re-nominations, and processes for after match team decisions.
- **Identifications Pathways** - This one pager identifies the aptitude and achievement pathways for identification. Additionally, it reminds GES at each site to review data from the top 15% of a grade level to continually screen for unidentified, yet potentially gifted students.
- **AIG Identification Folder & Procedure Checklist** - This document is kept in each nominated student's folder for gifted specialists to check off the completion of the process from nomination/referral to match team decision.
- **Back Mapping Plan**- The Director of Curriculum and Instruction establishes district timelines for identification processes in collaboration with the testing department and communicates to the GES. Testing timelines are also posted on the district AIG Website.
- **AIG Site Evidence Review**- This is an annual review document for each school. The review is prepared by the GES and shared with the principal, and Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Randomized site visits confirm the information provided on the evidence review.
  - **AIG Identification Compliance Check** - A document completed by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for each school during a folder audit. The document details NHCS AIG plan expectations for identification documentation and processes.
- **AIG Training site** - Linked to our district HUB, the information outlines all guidelines and procedures within the gifted program for gifted specialists. This site houses all documents, resources, forms, PD, etc. related to the gifted program. All gifted specialists are asked to bookmark this resource on their computers for easy and frequent access. This site is maintained by the Curriculum and Instruction Team.

- **Students Record Management Manual-** Maintained through Student Information Services. This district document describes what paperwork is kept in the students' records. AIG is included in the manual and district training for data managers. The document states that a Match Team Record, and Differentiated Education Plan, if one is created, is housed in a student's Module II, including students who were referred but not identified.

Screening, referral, and identification implementation are monitored by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, the site match team, and the site administration.

District Monitoring Methods:

- Scheduled and randomized site based visits with AIG specialist, site administration, and Director of Curriculum & Instruction to review compliance of screening, referral, identification, and data/files management processes detailed in the NHCS AIG gifted plan
- Monthly AIG staff professional development focus on teaching and/or reviewing policies, procedures, and processes aligned to the NHCS AIG Plan
- Annual AIG identification testing training, testing timelines, testing administration, and scoring procedures to ensure secure, fair and equitable testing practices across the LEA
  - NHCS designates multiple testing windows for AIG and also understands that individual needs may arise. Individual cases must be approved by the Curriculum & Instruction and Testing & Accountability Departments
  - Parents are notified in writing of the screening, referral, and identification processes and procedures, as well as when their child will be tested and the testing results using district formatted letters
- NHCS Gifted Advisory Council (GAC) school visits assists in monitoring consistency in regards to screening, referral, identification and program service delivery across the LEA
- Experienced AIG specialists mentor novice AIG specialists to facilitate consistent implementation of the screening, referral, identification and program service delivery of AIG students across the LEA
- Annual review of school AIG websites using AIG Website Review Rubric

---

## Practice E

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

**District Response:** NHCS implements county-wide procedures for students nominated for the AIG program, which are articulated to AIG stakeholders through multifaceted processes. Multiple formats of communication are utilized at each school as appropriate and applicable. These may include: automated calls to homes, social media posts, printed flyers, emails, newsletters, or district and school webpages. GES, teachers, and school administrators also personally reach out to students, parents, and stakeholders.

**Screening, Referral, and Identification:** All schools host an informational meeting for all grade levels about the AIG Program and disseminate brochures to interested families. All schools use the same informational meeting presentation and add specifics about the individual school to ensure consistent information is being shared district wide.

Screening and testing information is communicated to the parents/guardians of all 3rd grade students, any student who is recommended for additional testing, and is available in the front office of our school sites.

Primary caretakers of newly identified students are informed that AIG identification is not clearly tied to specific services and that current services are not permanent and can change depending upon factors including performance, school population, and availability. A new DEP will be written each year for your child. Parents/guardians are also able to provide feedback and make suggested changes to a DEP not only between school years, but at any time by contacting the gifted education specialist at their school.

The NHCS gifted program expectations for disseminating information to all AIG stakeholders includes:

District Level:

- The Gifted Advisory Council (GAC) facilitates organized parent information and/or training sessions through regularly scheduled meetings. Each school is invited to send at least one liaison to all meetings.
- AIG NHCS website is regularly updated.
- The Public Relations department informs parents through the LEA's website and other social media outlets of district wide updates.
- The Director of Curriculum and Instruction shares information about the gifted program at district principals meetings as needed.

School Level:

- In Person Dissemination of Information
  - Annual AIG informational meetings using the district presentation to overview the identification process and available services at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
  - GESs attend Open Houses and Back to School nights to share information about the AIG program.
  - Parents of newly nominated students receive a nomination notification letter and copy of the AIG Nomination & Identification Procedures brochure. They are invited to set up a meeting with the GES to discuss their child's DEP.
  - Multiple paper copies of the Local AIG Plan are available at each school site
  - GESs share information at faculty and grade level meetings in regards to the screening, referral, and identification process for the gifted program. They also include the information in teacher and grade level newsletters as needed.
  - AIG transition meetings between school levels ensure that identified students and students in the nomination process continue in the middle and high school levels.
- Online Dissemination of Information
  - The school's annual AIG presentation is posted on the school's AIG website for families who were unable to attend the meeting.
  - GESs create and disseminate monthly newsletters to stakeholders that highlight the school's AIG Program.
  - AIG school websites include information related to the six NC AIG Program Standards and are linked to the district AIG website that has an electronic copy of the AIG plan.

---

## 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:** NHCS documents the identification process for all nominated students by recording data on the Match Team Record (MTR).

Match Team Record documents:

- Student information
- Available testing data
- Artifacts collected, including advanced work samples and scores, data, and additional information provided by teachers
- Match Team Review decision and Continuation Match Team decision, if needed

Any time the match team makes a student decision the match team members sign the MTR. It is shared with the parents/guardians and parent notification is documented on the MTR.

MTRs for all identified and non-identified students are housed in student Module II folders as stated in the district Students Record Management Manual. Service options for individual AIG students are documented on the DEP. Copies of the documentation are provided to parents and the original form, discussed in a meeting with the parent/guardians, and signed by parents/guardians are kept in the student's cumulative record. The goal of using these forms is to effectively communicate the AIG identification process with parents and school staff members, indicate the student's area(s) of AIG identification, and identify the AIG services they shall receive. A copy of all identification, DEP, and service documentation is housed at the school in which the student is currently enrolled.

High School student documentation includes the MTR that is housed in the Module II of the student's Cumulative File and an Academic Blueprint that is kept in a secure location with the gifted education specialist. Academic Blueprints may be created as early as 7th grade depending on when the student enrolls in a high school course. Academic Blueprints are high school DEPs.

AIG Nomination Documentation Process for Elementary, Middle, and High School Levels:

- Students may be nominated at any time. Nomination forms can be found on all school AIG websites, district AIG website, and in printed form at each school. The initial nomination form starts the process.
- The GES will facilitate the collection of artifacts and test scores that take the whole child into account.
- A nomination folder is created for each nominated student. All collected data is kept in this folder.
- Data collection includes data from parents, teachers, and students.
- Once the appropriate artifacts/data have been collected it is reviewed by the Match Team and the Match team is encouraged to analyze data as a whole.
- Once a decision is made and is recorded on the MTR, all decisions are shared with the parents.
- If the Match Team needs additional data, like testing, a testing letter is sent to the

parents/guardians. The Match Team must meet again to review testing results.

- The Match Team signs the MTR each time a decision is made.
- The GES must make three attempts to deliver the Match team decision to parents/guardians to obtain signature on MTR. If after three attempts a signature is not obtained, GES will document attempted delivery dates on the MTR before filing in the student Module II folder.
- The grievance policy and the NHCS AIG Procedures for Disagreements is disseminated to all identified and non-identified students' parents.
- The MTR for identified and non-identified students is housed in the student's Module II folder of the cumulative file.

#### AIG Initially Identified Students:

- A DEP is developed based on the area of identification and best service options to meet the student's needs. This plan is developed with the parent, signed, and kept in the Module II cumulative file. The DEP is reviewed and signed annually with the student's teachers and parents/guardians. Parents can meet in person as the DEP is developed or can join via phone or electronic meeting.
- All identified students' service options will include strategies for differentiating instruction and grouping strategies. When general education strategies do not support adequate progress, particularly, twice exceptional and Intellectually Gifted students, more intentionally targeted service options may be provided. IG, highly gifted, and twice exceptional students may need additional support from school resources and will be documented on their DEP.
- Once a student is identified, the GES completes an AIG Data Input Form and gives it to the Data Manager to enter into the SIS.
- Nomination folders are housed in a secure location with the gifted education specialist. A current copy of the MTR and DEP are added to the nomination folder. Nomination folders for non-qualifying students are housed at the school site for one year after the student no longer attends the school, then they are shredded.

#### AIG Identified Students:

- Each year the Differentiated Education Plans, or DEPs, are updated based on AIG program implementation and individual student need. DEPs for gifted students in grades K-8 are reviewed annually with AIG families. This annual DEP review session usually takes place in the fall of each school year and includes the GES, classroom teacher(s), parents, and school administrator.
- DEPs for gifted students in grades 9-12 are reviewed with gifted students, GES, and school counselors yearly and reviewed with gifted parents upon request.
- TOPS folders are given to feeder schools during transition meetings, except at the high school level. TOPS folders are housed at the middle school for one year after the student progresses to high school.

#### **Procedures to Resolve Disagreement with Gifted Placement Options or Identification:**

In accordance with Article 9B, NHCS has a procedure for resolving disagreements between parents and the school system when a child is not identified for the AIG program or concerning the appropriateness of the service options offered to an identified AIG student. These procedures relate to the processes of student referral, evaluation, identification, and the availability of approved service options. The county procedures for resolving disagreements are

provided to parents once an identification decision has been made. In addition, this information is reviewed with parents at the annual review meetings.

If a parent has a disagreement with the gifted services within a classroom or with determination of giftedness, the following steps should be taken:

1. The parent/guardian should meet with the classroom teacher and/or GES to seek a resolution.
2. If this meeting does not resolve the issue, the parent/guardian should document the concerns in a letter, outlining the parent's perspective of the situation, to the school principal requesting a written response within ten working days.
3. If a resolution is not reached, the school-based AIG Match Team should schedule a meeting to review the problem and conference with school administration.
4. If a resolution is not reached at the school level, parents should contact the following Central Office staff to seek a resolution in the order listed:
  - a. NHCS Director of Curriculum & Instruction
  - b. The school's assigned Executive Director
  - c. Chief Academic Officer
  - d. Superintendent
5. After these opportunities, if the grievance is not resolved through the Superintendent's review, the parents/guardians may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of NC General Statutes.

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 and/or intellectually gifted student, or (ii) whether the local plan developed has been implemented appropriately with regard to the child.

Following a hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusion 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.

Attorney's fees are not available to parents/guardians in the event they decide on due process.

---

### **Practice G**

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

NHCS recognizes the importance of meeting every student's instructional needs. As elementary and middle school gifted students transition from year to year, the DEP will reflect the services that best align with the students' needs. K-8 DEPs are reviewed and signed annually with classroom teachers, gifted education staff, administrators, and parents. The signed DEP is placed in the student's Module II cumulative folder. (More details about the creation of the DEP can be found in Standard One, practice F)

High school students have a four year DEP called an Academic Blueprint. This plan allows for purposeful planning of student interests and goal setting, participation and recognition, and college

preparations, in addition to service options and annual review documentation. During annual review meetings the DEP and Academic Blueprints will be updated to reflect the student's needs. GESs meet with students regularly to update the Academic Pathways for Acceleration section of the Academic Blueprint.

High school GESs participate in registration and scheduling meetings for gifted students in grades 8- 12. GESs also host an annual parent meeting where the Academic Blueprint is explained, as well as the transition of gifted services in high school.

When developing support documents for the needs of twice exceptional students, GESs should be included. EC teachers are included in planning the instructional needs and services for twice exceptional students documented on the student's DEP.

---

## Standard 2:

### Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

*The LEA provides a K-12 AIG program with an array of services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners. These services will develop students' strengths through intentional learning experiences in various domains that are not dependent on the students' demographic background or economic means.*

---

#### Practice A

*Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the academic and intellectual needs of AIG students, across all grade levels, K-12, and learning environments, through collaboration with a variety of personnel. Services are aligned to students' advanced learning needs and AIG identification.*

**District Response:** The New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program provides a variety of AIG programming and services that are aligned with the North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards. Differentiated curriculum that enriches and extends the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) and instructional opportunities are used to address the unique needs of the AIG student. AIG programming consists of a continuum of services that address the academic, intellectual, social/emotional needs of gifted students in all settings and across all grade levels.

Gifted Education Specialists (GES) and regular education teachers collaborate to implement a variety of evidence-based programming to encourage the development of critical thinking, collaboration, creative thinking, communication, leadership, problem solving, and other future ready skills. General Education teachers will meet the needs of gifted students as indicated on their Differentiated Education Plans with support from the Gifted Education Specialists. Differentiation is based on a students' individual student needs. Advanced differentiation opportunities should be evident in lessons and address the academic and social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Differentiation can occur in the lesson content, learning process, products to assess learning, and/or learning environments through enrichment, acceleration, and/or extensions.

Information gathered during the AIG identification process, as well as additional data accumulated after initial identification, is discussed with classroom teachers to determine which particular differentiated services are needed. Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) are created for each identified gifted student to align the differentiated service options to the needs of the gifted student within the student's area of identification. Regular education teacher(s) delivering instruction in the area of student identification, GESs, school administration, and parents/guardians sign the DEPs. A gifted student's DEP is housed in the module two of the cumulative folder for access by teachers, specialists, and school counselors. In addition, GESs provide confidential class rosters of students identified as gifted for teachers. The lists include the students' area(s) of identification so that instruction can be differentiated appropriately. When implementing AIG services the GESs, regular education teachers, ML teachers, and other related professionals collaborate with one another, and parents/guardians, to ensure that gifted students' diverse learning needs are met.

NHCS recognizes that AIG students spend a majority of their school day in their classrooms. Therefore, classroom teachers working with gifted students are expected to complete the New Hanover County AIG Credentials training, which trains teachers to serve advanced students, recognize gifted tendencies, and differentiate instruction for gifted students in the regular classroom. Additionally, when selecting core curriculum resources through the RFP (request for proposal process), NHCS has utilized a rubric for evaluation that requires any program or purchased curriculum to include information on differentiation within the core resource. This allows teachers to have additional support ensuring they have strategies to adjust their instruction to meet the needs of our gifted learners.

### **K-12 Services for Gifted Students:**

In grades kindergarten through 3rd grade, the NHCS K-3 Nurturing Program provides services for all students to develop individual talents in both academic and cognitive skills. NHCS K-3 Nurturing Programming uses a variety of researched based programs and resources. District nurturing and talent development resources may include, but are not limited to:

- Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS)
- Bertie Kingore- Recognizing Gifted Potential
- The Problem Solver
- Tin Man Press educational materials
- Critical Thinking Tasks
- Jacob's Ladder
- Star Vocabulary
- Analogies and Visual Spatial Reasoning

All K-3 students continue to participate in nurturing lessons and talent development opportunities until the district's universal screener is administered and formal AIG identification takes place during their 3rd grade year.

#### **Services in K-3:**

- The GES teaches nurturing lessons to all students in K-3. Each GES will facilitate a minimum of 15 nurturing lessons to each K-2 classroom and provide additional talent development lessons for students who show advanced potential, contingent on the gifted specialist's scheduling demands.
- GESs will provide coaching and will serve as a resource to classroom teachers for additional enrichment and extension activities needed to meet the needs of high achieving students exhibiting gifted tendencies.
- Early admission to kindergarten aligned to general statute G.S. 115C-364(d) and state board policy 16.NCAC.06E.0105
- Single subject acceleration
- Whole grade acceleration (grade advancement)

#### **Services in 3-8:**

AIG services for students who are identified academically and/or intellectually gifted include:

- Differentiated curriculum and instruction designed to meet the academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs of gifted students within the general education setting. Differentiation should be based on current and ongoing data and is a primary daily responsibility of the classroom teacher.
- Participation in the NHCS gifted program Affective Curriculum for grades 3 through 8

- Flexible grouping options (cluster, ability, subject) to maximize advanced instruction with a teacher trained in gifted pedagogy
- GES pushing in to classrooms for whole class lessons, team teaching, or to facilitate small group instruction
- Pull-out resource class with GES
- GES supporting classroom teachers through collaboration, team teaching, coaching, curriculum compacting, providing advanced resources, and professional development
- Guidance in organization, time management, and decision making skills
- Extra-curricular programs and events are encouraged to enhance and further develop the intellectual needs and interests of AIG students
- Self-selected study topics, use of interests inventories, interest academies
- Pull out groups and/or individualized services, particularly for intellectually gifted students who have demonstrated high aptitude, but may not be achieving full academic potential
- For students whose general education strategies do not support adequate progress, more intentionally targeted service options may need to be provided. Support from additional school resources, like MTSS, may be needed

### **Services in 9-12:**

AIG services for students who are identified academically and/or intellectually gifted in high school include:

- Differentiated curriculum designed to meet the academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs of gifted students in all core subject areas, including Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), high school specialty programs such as STEM or Marine Science, and dual enrollment courses
- Formulation of Academic Blueprints to help students navigate a course of study that best matches their individual goals, strengths, and abilities. High school GES work with students to both develop their blueprint and have annual check-ins with students to determine if any changes need to be made in a student's course selection based on their academic and post high school goals
- Guidance in organization, time management, and decision making skills
- Opportunities for extracurricular activities, shadowing, internships, and volunteerism
- Opportunities to participate in seminars or workshops that address the social and emotional needs of gifted students
- Facilitation of student ownership in career planning
- Collaboration between GESs and counselors to guide student course and academic path selection
- Access to onsite GES for academic and social/emotional student needs

---

### **Practice B**

*Delivers an AIG program with comprehensive services that address the social and emotional needs of AIG students, across all grade levels, K-12, and learning environments, through collaboration with a variety of personnel based on student needs.*

**District Response:** NHCS AIG program realizes that gifted students may have social and emotional needs that must be addressed in order for the students to have optimal educational experiences. NHCS has created professional development devoted to the social and emotional

needs of gifted students in our local AIG Credentials Module II for teachers and other staff who work with gifted students.

We have also developed a district social and emotional curriculum for AIG students utilizing the following resources:

- "The Gifted Teen Survival Guide" by Judy Galbraith, M.A. and Jim Delisle, Ph.D.
- "I'm Not Just Gifted: Social-Emotional Curriculum for Guiding Gifted Kids" by Christine Fonseca
- "The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids" by Judy Galbraith, M.A.
- "Young, Gifted, and Black" by Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, Asa G. Hilliard III
- "Smart But Scattered" by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare
- "101 Success Strategies for Gifted Kids" by Christine Fonseca
- "When Gifted Kids Don't Have all the Answers" by Judy Galbraith M.A, and Ph.D. Jim Delisle

Specifically, in each grade band we have a focus on the social and emotional needs of AIG students through the following practices.

## **K-2**

- GES support during nurturing lessons to persevere through challenging tasks
- GES work with school counselors and/or school social workers to collaborate on identifying AIG students who may need individual or small group support from our trained counselors to meet their social and emotional needs

## **3-8**

- GES work with school counselors and/or school social workers to collaborate on identifying AIG students who may need individual or small group support from our trained counselors to meet their social and emotional needs
- Access to Harmony and Zones of Regulation resources at each school
- School counselors provide small group lessons as needed on topics such as perfectionism, motivation, friendship, and other topics that impact our AIG identified student population
- High school student led mentorship opportunities in which high school students mentor AIG students in 3-8th grade not only on academics, but the social and emotional side of being a gifted learner in a more peer-to-peer manner

## **9-12**

- GES work with school counselors and/or school social workers to collaborate on identifying AIG students who may need individual or small group support from our trained counselors to meet their social and emotional needs
- Opportunities to cultivate a sense of belonging through specialty programs such as STEM, Marine Science, IB, Lyceum, and our smaller Early College Campuses (WECHS, SEA-Tech, and Isaac Bear Early College) and academic clubs/competitions
- Collaboration between GES and CFCC liaison to support students in dual enrollment courses at the community college.

## **Parents**

- Our Gifted Advisory Council (GAC) has focused each meeting on a book study, article, podcast, or resource to support parents. Many topics selected by families support the social and emotional needs of AIG students including friendship, perfectionism, executive functioning, etc.
- Our GAC also conducts 3 site visits each year (elementary, middle, and high) and has a student panel in which they ask about not only academics, but what the students enjoy about our AIG program and how the program helps them not only academically but with social and emotional support as well.

## Teachers

In addition to facilitating the local AIG credentials for educators and the Social & Emotional (S & E) curriculum, the GES will:

- Collaborate with members of the NHCS student support team including counselors, social workers, and behavior specialists
- Attend and lead professional development to promote comprehensive support for social and emotional needs of gifted students
- Research and review books, articles, and websites that support social and emotional needs of gifted students, targeted for a variety of stakeholders (students, parents, teachers). Titles are included on GES's website to create a resource library for stakeholders
- Utilize the MTSS team at the school for social and emotional issues of gifted students as needed and collaborate with other support staff (curriculum and instruction team, student services team, and/or the exceptional children's department) to problem solve the needs of gifted students
- Invite key stakeholders (teachers, counselors, elective teachers, instructional support staff, and administrators) to DEP initial and annual review meetings
- Use research based resources such as Best Practices in Gifted Education, and resources listed on the NCAGT website to support the social and emotional needs of gifted students

---

## Practice C

*Integrates and connects the AIG program and services with the district's priorities and resources through policy and practice.*

**District Response:** The gifted education program communicates and collaborates with other instructional departments within schools and district wide to ensure AIG services are integrated and gifted curriculum resources are aligned with the total instructional program. The gifted education program partners with Multi-Tier Support System (MTSS), Senior Leadership Team, School Improvement Team (SIT) team, Curriculum and Instruction Team, Student Support Team, Exceptional Children's Department, Multilingual Learners Program, and other departmental teams.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction serves as the AIG supervisor. There is an intentional effort to include GES teachers in all district wide trainings. For example, in our previous adoptions of Wit & Wisdom reading core curriculum resource at the elementary level and in learning about the updated science standards K-12, GES specialists are included in either the professional development with general education teachers OR provided an opportunity to learn about district instructional priorities during their monthly GES meetings. Additionally, GES teachers are included on staff email lists, so as principals share out district priorities and resources, GES teachers are included in that communication.

The gifted program routinely aligns researched based resources and materials with NCSCOS and LEA programs producing materials and training for advanced classroom instruction. In addition, an AIG Curriculum Framework aligns county AIG curriculum resources with content areas and grade levels. Fidelity and consistency across schools is monitored through regular site visits and use of the site monitoring tool. School sites provide evidence to demonstrate alignment with all AIG state standards and the local AIG plan.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction monitors funds allotted for AIG programming by NHCS. Budget decisions about professional development, resources, and equipment are driven by the AIG needs assessment and county data. The NHCS gifted program budget purchases materials and resources for all elementary, middle, and high school gifted programs. Resources and materials are purchased for each site to ensure equitable access. Each site completes an annual inventory of materials to ensure that schools have systems in place to safeguard AIG materials. Documentation of the budget is reviewed annually by the district's Finance Director.

New Hanover County supports gifted education by allocating in the budget a full time GES for every elementary and middle school to ensure that the diverse needs of gifted learners are met. Currently, there are two GESs who serve the four traditional high schools. NHCS AIG program and the Gifted Advisory Council continues to advocate for full time GESs at the high school level. Our specialty high schools and alternative schools are supported by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the Supervisor of Innovative Programs. We are grateful to our school board for recognizing the needs for educators to support the needs of our advanced learners.

Recommendations for the NHCS gifted education program are also presented to the local Board of Education by the Gifted Advisory Council in an annual report. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction annually reviews policies that relate to AIG to ensure they are effective and based on current best practices in gifted education. Some local policies that relate to AIG are:

- Policy 2230 Board Committee assignments, allows one member of NHCS BOE to serve on the Gifted Advisory Council
- Policy 3101 Dual Enrollment
- Policy 3525 AIG Program
- Policy 4002 Parental Involvement
- Policy 4100 Early Kindergarten/Age Requirements for Initial Entry
- Policy 4125 Homeless Students
- Policy 4155 Assignment to Classes

---

## Practice D

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

**District Response:** There are many efforts made by the gifted program in the promotion of grouping practices for gifted students.

- GESs collaborate with school administration to assist in developing procedures for intentional grouping practices
- Reviews of AIG student data and class assignments with GESs and administrators are conducted at scheduled school site visits
- GESs also lead collaborative planning sessions with teachers to develop and implement flexible grouping strategies for the classroom
- The Director of Curriculum and Instruction discusses grouping practices with school principals and shares cluster and grouping articles and suggestions
- Annual training for GES on analyzing data, including EVAAS, to assess, reflect, and collaborate on achievement and growth of gifted and advanced students. GESs can

then monitor the grouping of AIG students in their schools and maintain data on how the grouping is affecting student growth and the effectiveness of the site grouping practices

Gifted students should be intentionally cluster-grouped in a content area or regular education classes with AIG trained teachers. The Director of C&I provides ongoing training to GESs on data analysis and best practices for student grouping in monthly AIG professional development sessions. Grouping practices are determined at each school site by the principal. Best practices call for gifted students to be in a cluster grouping of four to eight AIG and/or high ability students in the same grade level in one class with a teacher who has shown success with gifted learners, is trained to work with them, and will devote proportional class time to differentiating for them.

NHCS will utilize the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model to guide and make recommendations to school leaders who determine student grouping. This practice supports an increase to student achievement and provides increased opportunity for growth of our highest achieving students. It also allows for the school to consider a child's individual non-academics needs such as peer collaboration, executive functioning support, motivation in academics, and dual exceptionality.

NHCS gifted students may be grouped in:

- A small group of AIG students with an AIG specialist
- A specialized program delivered by the classroom teacher or specialist
- A high school specialty program (early college, IB, STEM, Lyceum, Marine Science Academy)
- Special classes to meet the individualized academic and/or intellectual needs of gifted students based on interest or academic performance
- Cooperative learning teams to promote accountability and positive interdependence, may be like or mixed ability groups
- Cross-graded classes and cross-age grouping of children by their achievement level in a subject area rather than by grade or age level which can also be known as multi-age classrooms
- Flexible skills grouping where students are matched to skills by virtue of readiness where movement among groups is common and based on readiness on a given skill and growth in that skill
- Ability grouping where children of high ability or with high achievement levels are put into a group for differentiating their instruction
- Like-ability cooperative learning that organizes groups of learners in three to four member teams of like ability and adjusts the group task accordingly

Since grouping decisions are site based, it is the goal of the gifted program that each school will design and implement grouping practices based on AIG student achievement and growth data, and the comprehensive needs of students.

---

## **Practice E**

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

**District Response:** Gifted specialists advocate for their gifted students by informing all AIG stakeholders of the state law that defines AIG, Article 9B, and of the AIG services the school is providing to identified gifted students. We additionally provide nurturing services to all K-2

students. Gifted staff at the school and district level communicate readily through email, websites, and virtual and face-to-face sessions.

NHCS Director of Curriculum and Instruction:

- Maintains and distributes the NHCS Manual for Gifted Education Specialists that includes quick guides and flow charts to support GESs
- Maintains an AIG Training site for gifted education specialists
- Facilitates training to GESs at monthly professional development
- Creates and maintains LEA AIG website with FAQ and AIG Plan links
- Coordinates LEA PD offerings to integrate AIG services and programs
- Updates, provides training, and disseminates AIG information to school principals and other district administrators at district principal meetings
- Assists Gifted Advisory Council chairperson with agendas and presentations at meetings
- Assigns peer mentors to new Gifted Education Specialist (new to role and new to district)
- Develops district presentations for gifted education specialists to utilize when providing information about AIG programs and services to teachers and parents

Elementary, Middle, and High School Levels:

- GES attends NHCS AIG Monthly Meetings
- GES will provide a link to the LEA AIG plan on their school AIG websites
- Multiple paper copies of the LEA AIG plan is housed at each school
- AIG Services are clearly defined on school AIG website
- GESs meet with stakeholders who work with gifted learners to inform them of Article 9B and appropriate services for these students, as it pertains to their area of identification
- Provide annual Match Team training for staff using district presentation
- Gifted rosters are shared with teachers, administrators, and counselors who work with gifted students
- Article 9B is posted on school AIG websites
- Current DEPs are filed in a student's Module II folders and can be accessed by appropriate stakeholders
- Provide ongoing notification of gifted student services and programs to teachers and schools via newsletters to families
- Parent, classroom teachers (in area identified), GES, and an administrator sign and date student DEPs

High School Level:

- Student, parent, administrator and/or counselor, and GES sign and date student DEPs/Academic Blueprint \*Planning guides and extra-curricular opportunities are posted on school AIG websites
- High school GESs maintain informative websites and AIG email groups to disseminate gifted education information and opportunities
- Organizes parent meetings to help parents and students with transitions from middle school to high school in regards to advanced academic pathways

---

## **Practice F**

*Communicates among and between teachers and schools to ensure an effective continuation of*

*K-12 services, especially at key transition points.*

**District Response:** K-12 GESs participate in yearly transition meetings to share information about student needs and services and to ensure the effective continuation of K-12 gifted services.

During the annual transition meeting, **GESs at the elementary level** will:

- Share completed transition documents for middle school specialists
- Document current roster with identification area and pertinent information that may impact the student's academic and intellectual success
- Transfer individual student nomination folders/data to middle school specialists

In addition to yearly transition meetings, **GESs at the middle school level** will:

- Visit feeder elementary schools as requested to review gifted programming and student goals and services at the middle school level
- Host a rising 6th grade informational session to inform parents of the program and identification practices
- Include ML teacher and/or family liaison in informational session(s) to offer translation services for families that speak a native language other than English
- Complete transition documents for High School GESs
- When possible, have all transition documents translated for families that speak a native language other than English
- Maintain a current roster with identification area and pertinent information that may impact student academic and intellectual success
- Assist High School Specialist with the creation of the Academic Blueprint for 8th graders

**GESs at the high school level** will:

- Visit feeder middle schools as requested to review gifted programming and student goals and services at the high school level
- Host rising 9th grade informational session(s) to inform parents of the program and identification practices
- Include ML teacher and/or family liaison in informational session(s) to offer translation services for families that speak a native language other than English
- Create Academic Blueprints for all rising 9th grade AIG students with assistance from the Middle School GES and counselors

In addition, at the beginning of each school year GESs provide confidential lists of students identified as gifted to pertinent instructional staff. The lists include the students' area(s) of identification so that instruction can be differentiated appropriately.

---

## **Practice G**

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

**District Response:** NHCS AIG Program provides a full continuum of services for acceleration, compacted content, CDM, Dual Enrollment, and Subject/Grade Acceleration.

**Acceleration** Acceleration Guidelines contain a research-supported menu of accelerative practices that result in academic achievement gains for advanced students. A longitudinal study published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* from Vanderbilt's Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth found that there are no negative effects on the long-term well-being of gifted youth from academic acceleration such as skipping grades, graduating early, or a combination of advanced educational placement methods (Bernstein et al., 2021).<sup>1</sup>

Acceleration opportunities include:

- Early entrance to school (Kindergarten)
- Advanced Placement courses
- Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM)
- Curriculum compacting
- Dual enrollment (Career and College Promise Program)
- Early college admission
- Honors courses
- Single subject acceleration
- Whole grade acceleration
- Special schools for gifted students (NC School of Science and Math and/or NC School of the Arts)
- Early College High School (WECHS, IBECHS, SEA-Tech)

The 1997 General Assembly passed legislation allowing a child who has reached his/her fourth birthday by April 16 to enter kindergarten if he or she demonstrates an extraordinary level of academic ability and maturity.

Early entrance to kindergarten: NHCS follows the state guidelines, as outlined in state policy. Policy ID Number: GCS-J-001 Policy Title: 16 NCAC 6E.0105 Policy delineating the standards for early admission to kindergarten. Current Policy Date: 07/09/1998 Other Historical Information: Statutory Reference: Administrative Procedures Act (APA) Reference Number and Category: 16 NCAC 6E .0105.

EARLY ADMISSION TO KINDERGARTEN - NHCS Student Support Services oversees this process. (a) To determine the eligibility of a four-year-old child to enter kindergarten pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 115C-364(d), the principal shall confer with a committee of professional educators to consider for each child the following factors:

1. **Student Aptitude.** The child shall be precocious in academic and social development and shall score at the 98th percentile on a standard individual test of intelligence such as the Stanford-Binet, The Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence, the Kaufman Anderson, or any other comparable test administered by a licensed psychologist.
2. **Achievement.** The child shall be functioning from two to three years beyond the child's peers. The child shall score at the 98th percentile on either reading or mathematics on a standard test of achievement such as the Metropolitan Readiness Test, the Stanford Early School Achievement Test, The Mini Battery of Achievement, the Woodcock-Johnson, the Test of Early Mathematics Ability (TEMA), the Test of Early Reading Ability (TERA), or any other comparable test administered by a licensed psychologist, a member of

<sup>1</sup> Bernstein, B. O., Lubinski, D., & Benbow, C. P. (2021). Academic acceleration in gifted youth and fruitless concerns regarding psychological well-being: A 35-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 113(4), 830–845. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000500>

the psychologist's professional staff, or a professional educator who is trained in the use of the instrument and who has no conflict of interest in the outcome of the assessment.

3. **Performance.** The child shall be able to perform tasks well above age peers as evidenced by behaviors in one or more areas such as independent reading, problem solving skills, advanced vocabulary, and some writing fluency. The parent shall submit a sample of the child's work that shows outstanding examples of ability in any area including, but not limited to, art, mathematics, writing, dramatic play, creative productions, science, or social interactions. The principal may also require a teacher to complete an informal reading assessment of the child.
4. **Observable Student Behavior/Student Interest.** The child shall demonstrate social and developmental maturity sufficient to participate in a structured setting for a full school day. The child shall be capable of following verbal instructions and functioning independently within a group. The parent shall provide two recommendation letters with specific documentation of physical and social maturity from preschool teachers, child care workers, pediatricians, or others who have direct knowledge of the child. Useful documentation checklists include the California Preschool Competency Scale, the Harrison Scale, or any other comparable scale of early social development.
5. **Motivation/Student Interest.** The principal or principal's designee shall conduct an informal interview with the child and a more structured interview with the parent to determine if the child displays a thirst for knowledge and seeks new and challenging learning situations. (b) The parent shall present the information required by this Rule to the principal within the first 30 calendar days of the school's instructional year. All testing shall be administered after the April 16th that follows the child's fourth birthday. The principal shall decide whether to grant the parent's request for enrollment within three weeks after receiving this information. The principal may conditionally enroll the child for up to ninety days in order to observe whether the child is able to adjust to the school setting. If the principal determines that the child has not adjusted to the school setting, the principal shall deny the request for enrollment. However, before the child is exited from school, the principal shall invite the parent to assist in the development of intervention strategies for the child. If those strategies are not successful, the principal shall provide the parent at least 10 days notice before exiting the child from school so the parent may arrange childcare, if needed. (c) LEAs may require parents to supply information in addition to that required by this Rule. LEAs may also require specific tests or other measures to provide information relating to the factors listed in (a) of this Rule. (d) Early admission to kindergarten shall not automatically result in the placement of the child in the program for academically gifted students. By the time the child has been enrolled for 90 calendar days, or at any earlier time that school officials determine that the child has adjusted satisfactorily and shall be allowed to remain in school, the gifted identification team shall review the child's information to determine if the child shall receive gifted services. If the team determines that the child shall receive gifted services, it shall develop either a differentiated education plan or an individual differentiated education plan for the child.

#### **Subject and Grade Acceleration:**

Currently, the district utilizes the Iowa Acceleration Scale for whole grade acceleration consideration and the NHCS Subject Acceleration Checklist for subject acceleration consideration. These tools provide clear, data driven guidelines to assist schools in making acceleration decisions for individual students.

Beyond acceleration opportunities offered in the general education classroom, schools have two additional acceleration options to help meet the needs of advanced student:

1. Whole Grade Acceleration (grade advancement) for K-8 students. Schools will use the Iowa Acceleration Scale, which is available from the Supervisor of AIG, to collect data on students being considered for whole grade acceleration. The scale totals will be used to guide the decision making of the Match Team. If acceleration is recommended, the planning guide will assist the team in creating an acceleration plan for the student.
2. Subject Acceleration (subject skipping) for K-8 students will use the NHCS Subject Acceleration Scale, which is available on the AIG website, to collect data and a body of evidence for students being considered for acceleration. The scale will be used by the school Match Team to make decisions.

Middle school students also have the opportunity for subject acceleration via **Compacted Content**. NHCS currently offers a pathway of compacted content for middle school mathematics. Determination for placement into a compacted math course is made district-wide placement criteria including EOG scores, EVAAS probability for Math 1 EOCs, and teacher recommendations. Students in compacted classes can stay in a compacted track or return to grade level content. Students who do not participate in compacted content will still have opportunities to access the highest possible levels of high school mathematics courses including AP Statistics, AP calculus, or other college credit options.

High school students are unable to participate in whole grade acceleration as grade level is determined by the number of completed credits toward graduation. However, they can accelerate in single subjects via the Credit By Demonstrated Mastery process.

### **Credit By Demonstrated Mastery:**

Credit By Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) is the process in which NHCS uses a body of evidence to award students credit in a particular high school level course without requiring the student to complete classroom instruction for a certain amount of seat time. NHCS follows the state guidelines, as outlined in state policy: State Board of Education Policy SBE GCS-M-001, Section 13. The procedure to determine eligibility for CDM is a two-phase process that includes:

#### **Phase One:**

- Student Application
- State or LEA designed test (The student must meet the score determined by the state board policy to qualify for phase II)

#### **Phase Two:**

- Student artifact to demonstrate deep understanding of the content
- The school's CDM team meets to score the phase II artifact by the district timeline date. A complete CDM process guide is on the district web page and each CDM site coordinator is trained on the process annually.

The school's CDM team meets to score the phase II artifact by the district timeline date. A complete CDM process guide is on the district web page and each CDM site coordinator is trained on the process annually.

### **Dual Enrollment:**

The GES at the high school level collaborates with community college liaison for dual

enrollment opportunities. In alignment with our board policy 3101, high school students who wish to enroll in classes taught by college, university, community college, or other approved entities are allowed to do so.

In NHCS our students primarily participate in Career and College Promise Dual Enrollment via Cape Fear Community College. Students are scheduled into a CFCC course that appears on the student's transcript. Counselors support students in selecting courses that will count towards their high school graduation requirements.

As a district, we have existing MOUs with local universities to support partnerships including CFCC and UNCW. These MOUs provide partnerships between NHCS and the universities for students in our specialty programs, early colleges, and traditional high schools.

Additionally, we have a process for students to request courses outside of our existing MOUs. Students who wish to take a course elsewhere, may request in writing from their principal a consideration for an out-of-county collegiate course. Students must have a demonstrated academic need (for example an advanced math course) and the requested course cannot be offered within our existing MOUs with UNCW and CFCC.

---

## **Practice H**

*Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students with early intervention and talent development opportunities through purposeful and intentional programming.*

**District Response:** The purpose of the NHCS Nurturing Program is to develop talents and provide critical and creative thinking opportunities for all students in grades K-3. Whole class nurturing lessons provide opportunities for all students and also help classroom teachers and GES identify students who show potential and need further talent development. Each school has a GES who uses the Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS), a curriculum for higher level thinking, in grades K-3. GES are expected to facilitate 15 sessions per K-2 classroom.

Classroom teachers will remain in the room during PETS lessons to observe student behaviors and record students showing the lesson's targeted behaviors. These observations are used to help form small groups for further talent development.

In addition to the whole class nurturing lessons and talent development opportunities, GES should collaborate with K-3 teachers and provide resources to support advanced learning for students who have demonstrated a need and readiness for more rigorous learning. The use of K-2 district assessments including mClass, AIMSweb, K-1 math benchmarks, and classroom assessments are also used to identify and support students who may need advanced academic instruction.

Some additional K-3 advanced resources available at each school include, but not limited to:

- Kingore Observational Inventories (KOI) and Planned Experiences
- Jacob's Ladder primary fiction and nonfiction resource manuals with supplementary books
- Tin Man Press materials
- Problem Solvers
- Zaccaro's Primarily Challenged math book
- Marcy Cook resources
- Extensive collection of Thinklab games to enhance thinking skills

- Multiple analogy teaching resources

Elementary GESs are responsible for:

- Facilitating a school-wide K-3 Nurturing program, including an analogy unit in third grade
- Providing resources and instructional support for classroom teachers and/or providing individual and small group instruction to students who have demonstrated advanced potential
- Using and sharing K-3 resources from the NHCS AIG Curriculum Framework and school AIG resources

---

## Practice I

*Develops mindsets, policies, and practices to promote equity and excellence by broadening access to advanced learning opportunities through a variety of talent development efforts, including frontloading, in grades 4-12.*

**District Response:** NHCS local budget affords the program a full time GES at each elementary and middle school, as well as, two full time GESs to serve the four traditional high schools. This allows the GESs to collaborate with multilingual and special education teachers as well as support staff such as early literacy facilitators, instructional coaches, or department chairs to focus on intentional programming and opportunities to broaden access to advanced learning for students who demonstrate the academic or intellectual need.

The District ML Lead and EC Department work to find additional data to support efforts in providing opportunities for English language learners and twice exceptional students. For example, we review our ACCESS data with the ML teachers to see if any students are acquiring English language skills at a particularly advanced rate. We have found that many multilingual students who have gifted language abilities are able to demonstrate that giftedness through their growth on ACCESS.

GES at each school facilitate the collection of data (usually in PLCs) to find students who have shown potential and may benefit from advanced course opportunities. The list of students is shared with middle school and high school GESs and the building administrator with the recommendation of placing the students in advanced courses. At the secondary level, data from our compacted courses, CDM passing rates, and dual enrollment numbers help us to guide decisions to ensure broad access is provided for advanced learning opportunities. We have a process in place for students at the high school who are taking collegiate level courses outside of the district as well to meet their academic needs when a course is not offered within our existing MOUs. This process has been used by students to take advanced Hindi language courses at NC State, advanced math courses at out of state institutions, and allows for us to broaden access beyond what we can provide through honors, IB, and/or AP coursework. Current strategies used in NHCS gifted program to broaden access to advanced learning opportunities:

- GES collaboration with multilingual teachers to provide additional lessons or activities to nurture students with language barriers.
- Community partnerships to enhance interests and abilities of highly gifted students
  - A community partner is sponsoring a NHCS spelling bee
  - A community partner provides additional funding and volunteer support for Science Olympiad
  - We host MathCounts, Science Fair, History Bowl, Battle of the Books, and other academic

competitions that are all students regardless of AIG identification

- Flexible grouping practices that allow students the opportunity to participate in advanced learning
- Intentional collection, analyzing, and sharing of data to identify students with potential
- Extension of intentional talent development in grades 3-8 in lower performing schools
- Application process to early colleges is open to all students and weighted to align with the school goals of supporting first generation college students
- Collaboration with CTE and Wilmington Chamber of Commerce to provide field trips to local companies which allow students to see connections between their academics and applications to real world jobs. We often see potential in students sparked when the real-world context is seen first hand.

GESs at the high school level regularly review and analyze academic data of AIG students as well as those in honors, IB, and AP courses for nomination to local, state, and national academic programs based on their criteria for enrollment:

- Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA)
- Project Uplift (UNC Chapel Hill)
- Seahawk Leadership Conference (UNCW)
- Seahawk STEAM Academy (UNCW)
- Telluride Association Sophomore Seminar (TASS)
- Telluride Association Summer Program (TASP)
- Collaboration with the STAE program educators

High School Specialists also collaborate with other staff to establish internships and mentors for students interested in specific career based exploration.

High School Specialists advise and encourage high school students to earn one or more endorsements on their high school diploma. These endorsements indicate that students have completed specific course concentrations preparing them to be ready for careers and/or college. Based on State Board of Education policy (GRAD-007), the seven diploma endorsements available to NC public school graduates are:

- **Career Endorsement** indicates completion of a rigorous course of study that includes a Career Technical Education concentration.
- **College Endorsement** indicates readiness for entry into NC Community Colleges.
- **College/UNC Endorsement** indicates readiness for entry into a four-year university in the University of North Carolina system.
- **NC Academic Scholars Endorsement** indicates that students have completed a balanced and academically rigorous high school program preparing them for post-secondary education.
- **Global Languages Endorsement** indicates proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English.
- **Arts Proficiency Endorsement** indicates rigorous completion of an artistic track (music, drama, dance, visual arts etc.) that included by coursework and extracurricular involvement in the local arts community
- **Citizenship Proficiency Endorsement** indicates proficiency in US Civics and aligns to the USCIS Naturalization Test requirements

---

## Practice J

*Enhances and further develops the needs, talents, and interests of AIG students through extra-curricular programming during and outside of the school day.*

**District Response:** New Hanover County Schools currently offers a variety of academic and intellectual extracurricular opportunities both during the school day and after school hours:

- Opportunities for students to demonstrate and explore academic interests during the school year (NHCS Science Fair, Science Olympiad, Math Counts, International Baccalaureate (IBSO), Odyssey of the Mind, Best Foot Forward Arts Show, Battle of the Books, History Bowl, TrigStars, All County Chorus, Spelling Bee, Chess Tournaments, etc.)
- Focused leadership opportunities such as but not limited to: student government organizations, BETA clubs, Honor Society, Student Voice
- Service opportunities unique to each school including opportunities for AIG students based on interests and led by experts in our community
- ROCAME Engineering program, Girls in Technology, and other STEM based opportunities
- North Carolina Governor's School
- Duke University Summer TIP program
- Many AIG students are also part of sports teams for our schools and/or local athletic organizations

These opportunities and more are advertised on individual schools' AIG website, in addition to newsletters, social media, and flyers.

These opportunities develop our AIG students both academically and socially:

- Competition teams (BOB, Sci Olympiad, Math Counts, Chess clubs, etc) require students to work collaboratively and to enhance their communication and critical thinking skills
- Individual opportunities such as internships or participation in the science fair, require students to take personal responsibility for their learning and to enter the space with a learner's mindset ready to engage in real world problem solving
- When student are given the opportunity to leave our county for extracurricular activities (i.e. Governor's School, TIP, or advancing to state level competitions) they further learn to be adaptable to new situations, communicate beyond our own community, and experience our great state.

We believe extracurricular activities enhance a students' school experience. They are opportunities to grow in the durable skills of a successful life: adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, and personal responsibility. These skills listed as part of the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate showcase how academic knowledge sits alongside the knowledge of how to be, how to lead, and how to succeed, and how to thrive after their K-12 educational experiences.

## Standard 3: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

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

### Practice A

*Adapts the NC Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) K-12 to address a range of advanced ability levels in language arts, mathematics, and other content areas as appropriate by differentiating curriculum and instruction, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration strategies.*

**District Response:** In New Hanover County Schools differentiated instruction shall be provided to gifted learners to extend, enrich, and/or accelerate their content knowledge. We believe differentiation begins in the regular education classroom, therefore collaboration between the classroom teacher and Gifted Education Specialist (GES) is critical. Working together, the GES and content area teachers can ensure clarity about the content being taught and why it is important as well as the strategies to support AIG students.

The NHCS key principles of differentiated instruction are based on the NCDPI definition of differentiation “*adapting the curriculum, instruction, and learning environment to address a range of student needs including:*

- Using pre assessment and various other data to identify student abilities, readiness, and interests.
- Maintaining that all student-centered instructional practices and materials are standards-based
- Adapting the content by creating experiences that accelerate, enrich, and extend the NCSCOS including adjusting instructional pacing, depth, and/or complexity
- Modifying the process and product by incorporating multiple instructional practices, including strategic grouping, intentional scaffolding, and using a variety of resources and materials
- Organizing the physical classroom and learning activities in ways that maximize student learning and respond to student needs
- Developing processes and procedures to manage student and teacher interactions during a variety of learning activities
- Analyzing data from formative and summative assessment results to assess learning and shape future instructional decisions

The following is not an exhaustive list, but a sampling of the types of differentiation provided by our classroom teachers and gifted education specialists.

### Enrichment Strategy Examples

- K-3 Nurturing program: all students receive instruction in critical thinking
- GES enrichment units focused on student interest and talents
- Opportunities for student led choice based on talent and interest such as during research projects, student internships, and service-learning opportunities
- Flexible grouping during intervention/mastery/“what I need” time in all grades K-8
- Choice Boards

### **Extension Strategy Examples**

- Differentiation of math problems to increase rigor and difficulty of the concept
- “Deep Dives” to increase text complexity and build curriculum connections in our elementary ELA curriculum
- Student options for novel studies in upper elementary and secondary schools led by the GES aligned to standards being addressed in the child’s ELA classroom
- Use of document based questions (DBQ) in social studies resources to allow students depth of complex primary historical resources

### **Acceleration Strategy Examples**

- Early entrance to kindergarten
- Whole grade acceleration process
- Compacted math courses for middle school
- AP, IB, and Dual enrollment courses for high school students to access collegiate level coursework

GESs and classroom teachers should utilize current evidence based instructional practices that differentiate content, process, and product for our gifted learners based on their readiness, interests, and individual needs. These practices may include, but not limited to:

- Active Engagement
- Conceptual Discussions
- Debates
- Flexible tasks
- Flipped classroom
- Independent Learning Contracts
- Interest inventories that drive content, process, or product choices
- Problem- Based Learning
- Small Group Instruction
- Simulations
- Socratic/Paideia Seminar
- Subject Integration
- Thinking Maps
- Tiered assignments

Differentiated instructional practices will involve grouping students. Grouping strategies for ALL identified AIG students may include:

- Ability grouping
- Cluster grouping
- Cooperative learning teams
- Cross-grade classes, cross-age grouping
- Flexible skills grouping
- Regrouping by achievement for subject instruction
- Within class performance grouping

SOME identified AIG students may receive strategic targeted instruction, in addition to the core instruction, so that ceilings are not placed on learning. These options may include

everything listed in the ALL section and may also included but not limited to:

- Competitions or advanced academic clubs such as history teams, math counts, science olympiad, chess clubs, mock trial teams, and/or geography/spelling bees
  - Conceptual learning based on student interest
  - Goal setting for post graduation planning (college, career, enlistment)
- 

## **Practice B**

*Uses students' identified abilities, readiness, and interests to address a range of learning needs K-12.*

**District Response:** GESs and classroom teachers use the DEP to make decisions about a students' instructional needs. They also rely on data from sources including county and state assessments, pretest assessments, observational notes, entrance/exit slips, and student performance on classroom assessments..

NHCS provides a continuum of AIG programming to allow for the vast range of individual needs of AIG students and to implement a variety of evidence-based programming options for acceleration and enrichment. Instructional services for AIG students will be differentiated based on identification, performance, and data collected through ongoing assessments.

Decisions about the best instructional strategy to student's learning needs are reassessed multiple times throughout the year.

- 1) During the initial DEP creation (see standard 1)
- 2) Annual in collaboration with the students' parents when they review the DEP
- 3) At the start of a unit of study, module, or topic via pre-assessment data
- 4) Throughout a unit of study, module, or topic via student performance, exit tickets, classroom observations, and in conversation with other teachers (PLCS process, GES collaboration, SPED/ML teacher support)
- 5) Data analysis of student mastery through end of unit projects, writing samples, tests
- 6) Data analysis of LEA and statewide assessments such as NCCI or EOC/EOGs

Instructional decisions are also taken into consideration with a student's emotional, social, and non-academic needs. Though academics is the primary factor for instructional choices, it certainly does not exist in a vacuum. In order to make these instructional decisions, classroom teachers, GES, multilingual teachers, and special education teachers regularly collaborate together. This collaboration happens during PLC, grade level meetings, MTSS discussions, school wide and grade level data digs, and as needed on an individual basis.

Parents are included in the process during the DEP creation and updates, and then are notified about instructional and student learning via parent communication (phone calls, emails), class newsletters, parent nights, and school websites/social media. Parents are always encouraged to have 2-way communication with teachers and set up conferences to discuss their child's individualized learning needs.

---

## **Practice C**

*Incorporates a variety of evidence-based resources that address the range of academic, intellectual, and social and emotional needs of AIG students*

**District Response:** The Director of Curriculum and Instruction maintains a gifted education

resource library for the district and each school site, including books and program manuals that support current research in gifted education and LEA initiatives. The school level resource library is inventoried at the start of each year by the GES at each school and items are replaced if lost/damaged. Additionally, the items held for all district use are inventoried and shared at the start of the year for any principal, GES, or classroom teachers who would like to borrow them. These researched-based materials help ensure best practices for gifted learners are consistently implemented throughout the county.

Evidence-based resources at each site may include:

- K-3 Nurturing Program-Primary Education Thinking Skills, or PETS program
- Kingore Observational Inventory (KOI) and Planned Experiences K-6
- Jacob's Ladder
- William and Mary resources for ELA and math
- Junior Great Books
- SAT vocabulary
- Problem Solver
- Socratic and Paideia Seminar resources
- InterAct Simulations
- ZaccaroChallenge Math
- Content-based choice menus
- Access to College Board AP classroom
- Digital access to Byrdseed TV, breakout EDU, and PBL (digital)
- GES created standards toolkit with extension/enrichment for each standard

We also have resources that are vetted and researched based to address the social-emotional needs of learners. The Affective Curriculum developed in NHCS implements all or parts of the following resources:

- *The Gifted Teen Survival Guide* by Judy Galbraith, M.A. and Jim Delisle, Ph.D.
- *I'm Not Just Gifted: Social-Emotional Curriculum for Guiding Gifted Kids* by Christine Fonseca
- *The Survival Guide for Gifted Kids* by Judy Galbraith, M.A.
- *Smart But Scattered* by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare
- *101 Success Strategies for Gifted Kids* by Christine Fonseca
- *When Gifted Kids Don't Have all the Answers* by Judy Galbraith M.A, and Ph.D. Jim Delisle

The GESs continuously align the AIG resource materials to NCSCOS and LEA pacing guides, as well as create units of study for classroom use with advanced students. District training is provided to all stakeholders involved in implementing the units and using advanced resource materials. NHCS has adopted curriculums in ELA and mathematics for all students. The GESs work with district Instructional Department members in Language Arts and Math to incorporate research based gifted resources to complement the district curricular initiatives. All of the instructional resources created by the gifted program are available on the AIG Training site for easy access for the GESs.

When an ask is made for additional resources the resources are vetted and then purchased based on GES interest and available funds.

---

## **Practice D**

*Fosters the development of durable skills and mindsets which support post-secondary success.*

*These skills include adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical and creative thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, and personal responsibility.*

**District Response:** NHCS AIG program integrates opportunities to develop durable skills and mindsets within a real world context. Research indicates that curiosity is critical to academic performance and joined with conscientiousness can have as much of an impact on achievement as intelligence. Fostering student curiosity can have a direct impact on student engagement, interest, and assist students in driving their learning (Gruber et al., 2014<sup>2</sup>).

These skills might include the following:

- Professional development for all stakeholders, particularly GESs, classroom teachers, and administrators. Guest speakers and presenters at monthly AIG PD to help tie together academics with durable skills and mindsets.
- Opportunities for collaboration and curriculum development incorporating future-ready skills among gifted specialists and cross-curricular teaching teams and departments.
- Opportunities to apply learning in real life contexts such as Odyssey of the Mind, Science Olympiad, Debate, and Interest Academies. This allows for opportunities to collaborate, communicate, and engage with critical and creative thinking and a learner's mindset as they face challenges unfamiliar to them.
- Partnerships with community organizations for learning service projects and community service projects through the Honors Service Learning high school course and/or the AP/IB and WE programs. These programs build adaptability, critical and creative thinking, and oftentimes empathy as students explore the larger world around them outside of the 4 classroom walls.
- Mentoring, job shadowing, internships or apprenticeships with local businesses allow our high school students' to begin taking personal responsibility for their learning and interests.
- Opportunities for students to have critical discussions and dialogue with like-minded peers, such as in student debates and instructional seminars, AP Capstone, and Model UN. These build our students' communication in addition to their roles in student voice and student government.

These examples are ways in which we ensure students are meeting the portrait of a graduate skillset. However, the list is not exhaustive as students have ample opportunity to develop not only as good students, but as successful humans with the durable "soft skills" to take on any challenge they will face in their futures.

---

## Practice E

*Uses ongoing assessment, both formative and summative, to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction and inform flexible grouping practices.*

**District Response:** NHCS employs consistent assessment practices with all students. State level benchmarks, county assessments, and pre & post assessments are used to drive instruction and inform grouping of students. GESs are required to review and analyze gifted student data on an ongoing basis. Statewide assessment data is used to reflect on the effectiveness of gifted services and grouping decisions at each school, to collaborate with other instructional staff, and to plan success strategies for gifted students in the future. GESs request

---

<sup>2</sup> Gruber, M. J., Gelman, B. D., & Ranganath, C. (2014). States of Curiosity Modulate Hippocampus-Dependent Learning via the Dopaminergic Circuit. *Neuron*, 84(2), 486–496. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2014.08.060>.

to collaborate with administration in planning grouping and placement of AIG students. GESs participate in district and school level training on student data analysis and how to use it effectively. Each school includes their GES in their response to data process to ensure every student is making a year's worth of growth (or more) for a year's worth of work.

GESs support classroom teachers in implementing differentiated instruction and flexible classroom grouping strategies based on disaggregated student data, like the NC Check-ins. On-going assessment data is utilized to drive instructional decisions and to support the growth of gifted students. GESs assist general education teachers in creating pre-assessments to match instructional decisions and student grouping with student needs.

Assessment data in regards to gifted education are reviewed by each school's administration and leadership team. Annual district wide data is reviewed by the school leadership, Executive Directors, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Superintendent.

---

## **Practice F**

*Collaborates with a variety of personnel, based on student needs, to implement differentiated curriculum and instruction.*

**District Response:** NHCS recognizes gifted students as AIG all day, every day. In order to meet our students' needs, collaboration among all staff is essential when developing appropriate curriculum and instruction.

The Director of C&I and the content area leads in the C&I department work with each school to implement differentiated classroom curriculum and instruction materials and resources to use with advanced learners. District wide collaboration to support AIG students includes with the finance department when purchasing resource based item, student support services for social emotional needs of gifted learners and to engage in drop-out prevention, the multilingual and special education teams to support twice exceptional AIG students, and among the curriculum and instructional staff for cross-content collaboration. Additionally, we have district wide collaboration with the university (UNCW), regional and state supports to ensure we have provided a premier academic and learning experience for our gifted students.

GESs facilitate the local AIG Credential Modules at their assigned schools. Part of the training requires teachers to effectively differentiate lessons for advanced learners. GESs collaborate with all teachers to assist and plan the differentiation of the standard curriculum for gifted students. GESs provide additional training for classroom teachers on how to use advanced resources and materials as part of their instruction. GESs also model how to use advanced lessons and units created by the AIG team. While NHCS has processes and procedures to assist in accelerating students, each school is responsible for creating a school plan that allows gifted students to accelerate when needed. This process is documented and discussed during school site visits.

GESs ensure collaboration by:

- Attending monthly AIG Professional Development training to learn research based strategies and facilitate learning at individual sites
- Attending grade level and/or department meetings
- Leading and participating in PLCs

- Email communications
  - Data analysis meetings
  - Scheduling time specifically for collaboration with regular education teachers
  - Participating in the MTSS process for advanced and AIG identified students
  - Working with special education teachers to meet the needs of twice exceptional students
  - Consulting with ML teachers to make sure that multilingual have access to differentiated instruction, as need
  - Work closely with guidance counselors to address the academic and emotional needs of students
  - Planning with teachers and the instructional coach to meet the needs of gifted learners in the regular classroom, particularly when differentiating core instruction and small group instruction
-

## Standard 4: Personnel and Professional Development

*The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the diverse needs of gifted learners that is ongoing and comprehensive.*

### 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:** NHCS recognizes the importance of the AIG program and the need to monitor the implementation and fidelity of the program. Our district budget process focused on the requests of teachers, parents, and our community and prioritized maintaining our teachers by providing a GES in each building, including at our secondary schools. Therefore, our program is led in collaboration with Curriculum and Instruction under one director. This allows for strong alignment between our district goals and initiatives and support for AIG students. However, we are always advocating to increase our support of gifted learners, and it is possible to bring back a dedicated role of AIG Supervisor should the funding become available.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction, in the role of leading our AIG plan and program is responsible to:

### Guide, Plan, and Develop our AIG program and plan:

- Develops and collaborates with planning committee to revise NHCS AIG Plan every 3 years
- Collaborates with district leadership to address gifted education in regards to LEA initiatives
- Serves as a nonvoting member of the Gifted Advisory Council
- Maintains our partnership with higher education institutes, like UNCW Gifted Education Department, for licensure, forums, and staff development for regular classroom teachers
- Attends both regional Coordinators of Gifted Education and statewide AIG meetings to stay informed of and trained in current issues in gifted education

### Implementation of our AIG program and plan:

- Manages the AIG budget including material and resource selection and professional development
- Consults with GES, classroom teachers, parents, administrators, and counselors to ensure the implementation of services for advanced learners
- Oversees the screening, referral, and identification process at the district level
- Oversees the dissemination of DPI information and district processes and procedures in regards to Credit by Demonstrated Mastery(CDM)
- Facilitates discussions and professional development in decisions for whole grade or subject acceleration
- Facilitates AIG meetings and professional development for all K-12 GESs
- Participates in professional development for LEA initiatives, regional, and statewide conferences to support gifted education
- Mediation of parents, GESs, classroom teachers, match team members, and administrators in dealing with disagreements concerning all phases of the program

### Monitor and Revision of our AIG program and plan:

- Monitors adherence at the district level to our local BOE approved NHCS AIG Plan
- Monitors the implementation of gifted education services through individual K-12 site visits, meeting with the Gifted Education Specialists (GES) and school administration to review how the site is

- following the district AIG Plan, and NCDPI AIG State Standards
- Monitors the system and process used to document student identification and services
- Analyzes, summarizes, and uses district AIG student performance data, AP/IB/honors enrollment, acceptance rates for Governor's schools, etc. to inform any changes to our plans or instruction to improve student outcomes and opportunities
- Monitors the development and implementation of local AIG Credentials for classroom teachers

#### **Alignment of Roles within C&I to support advanced learning:**

- A C&I team member leads Governor's School process, which includes, working with high school GESs and counselors and overseeing the Governor's School Selection Committee
- Our Supervisor of Special Programs, serves as the lead connection to the North Carolina AP Partnership and disseminating AP/IB updates from DPI and College Board to NHCS stakeholders; gifted specialists, administrators, counselors, and testing coordinators
- Ensure content area specialists are informed of gifted education research related to their area of study
- In collaboration with our communications department, develops and maintains district informational tools, such as an AIG district website, form letters, and AIG brochures

---

#### **Practice B**

*Engages AIG-licensed specialists in tasks that explicitly address the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of K-12 AIG students and supports the implementation of local AIG program and plan.*

**District Response:** NHCS recognizes the importance of gifted education and employs a full time GES at each elementary and middle school site; with a half time position at each traditional high school and our two re-start elementary schools. GESs employed by NHCS must be AIG certified according to NCDPI requirements. GESs who are not yet certified must follow NCDPI and NHCS guidelines to earn an AIG license.

All GESs are responsible for:

#### **Instruction:**

- Teaching our gifted students in whole group, small group, co taught courses or lessons, and through independent studies
- Works directly with classroom teachers to develop and provide rigorous differentiation for gifted learners
- Plans lessons to enhance, enrich, or supplement the NCSOS that engage gifted learners
- Provides student feedback and grades (when applicable),
- Reviews and analyzes ongoing, formative, benchmark, and summative data for all AIG identified students
- Responds to the academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs of gifted students

#### **Communication:**

- Advocates for gifted learners in the school
- Communicates to parents in a timely manner using newsletters, emails, phone calls, and district approved forms of communication (Class Dojo, Remind App, etc.)

- Maintains a school AIG website
- Facilitates parent informational sessions regarding identification processes and criteria by adapting the district presentation to include the school's specific information
- Collaborates with staff members at the school to meet the cognitive, academic, and affective needs of gifted learners
- Promotes extracurricular opportunities for gifted students, including intellectually gifted learners
- Recruits and supports site-based liaisons for the Gifted Advisory Council to ensure school representation
- Reflects and provides feedback to school and district leaders on AIG program within NHCS

#### **Paperwork/Compliance Documentation:**

- Demonstrates alignment and implementation of all six NCAIG standards at their site
- Facilitates annual DEP reviews with AIG families
- Organizes, shares, and facilitates AIG screening, referral, and identification at their site
- Assists the school's testing coordinator to facilitate testing for AIG screening and identification
- Maintains accurate and current AIG paperwork on all nominated and identified students
- Follows the documented process for placing transfer students with AIG identification
- Ensures the AIG roster in our student information system (Infinite Campus) is accurate and assisting the school's data manager in reporting to the district and in completing DPI headcounts
- Leads match team meetings and provides descriptive feedback via the Match Team record as documentation of decision making

#### **Professional Development:**

- Leads professional development at the school site to support classroom teachers with meeting the needs of gifted learners
- Facilitates the school's annual Match Team training using the district presentation
- Facilitates the NHCS Local AIG Credentials for teachers at the school site or partnering with another school to offer all four modules each year
- Attends professional development by participating in NHCS monthly AIG training/PD sessions

#### **Elementary GESs are also responsible for:**

- Reviewing and analyzing on-going, benchmark, and summative data for students in grades K-3
- Implementing a nurturing program for students in grades K-3 that aligns with the state standards and AIG plan using PETS curriculum, and providing additional talent development support for students who demonstrate potential
- Ensuring that all third graders participate in the district analogy unit of instruction
- Supporting student transition from elementary to middle school by sharing relevant documents and data

#### **Middle School GESs are also responsible for:**

- Advising students and parents to develop advanced course pathways as needed, including taking high school courses in middle school
- Assisting high school specialists and counselors in completing an Academic Blueprint for all identified 8th grade gifted students
- Supporting student transition from middle to high school by sharing relevant

documents and data

**High School GESs are also responsible for:**

- Coordinating with middle school GESs and counselors to complete an Academic Blueprint for identified 8th grade gifted students
- Supporting student transition from high school by facilitating college and career planning
- Purposefully planning with students and parents to communicate alternate course paths like North Carolina Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS), Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM), Honors, and Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual enrollment or other collegiate opportunities
- Disseminating information about advanced and unique opportunities for gifted students, including but not limited to Governor's School, North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM), Duke TIP, available scholarships, and summer opportunities

---

**Practice C**

*Establishes specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, instructional specialists, student services personnel, and school administrators.*

**District Response:** NHCS has developed strategic professional development for AIG stakeholders, including GESs, classroom teachers, administrators, and counselors.

<b>Audience for PD:</b>	<b>Professional Development Offering:</b>	<b>Structure:</b>	<b>Provider/Organizer:</b>
All gifted education specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alignment to LEA initiatives</li><li>• PD focused on needs of AIG students based on data and GES feedback</li><li>• Cross School networking</li></ul>	<p>Minimum of quarterly, but a goal of monthly in person GES meetings</p> <p>Monthly PLC based on grade band and geographic location in the county</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum &amp; Instruction</p> <p>Content area specialists (Math, ELA, SS, Sci, World Language, Arts)</p>
Beginning gifted education specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mentorship program</li></ul>	1:1 match between beginning GES and veteran GES.	Mentors assigned by Director of C&I; requires principal approval
Classroom Teachers, ML, EC, CTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AIG local credential modules and courses (K-12)</li><li>• AIG local refresher credentials</li></ul>	Digitally, self paced, via canvas	GES provide for their site; specialty schools supported by Supervisor for Innovative Programs
Counselors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborative PD focused on emotional needs of gifted learners, course work and pathways, and affective curriculum</li></ul>	As needed, with a goal of 1-2x per year	GES should work to schedule with the school counselor or social workers
Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data dig into AIG outcomes</li><li>• Alignment of AIG and LEA initiatives</li></ul>	Embedded into the instructional component of monthly principal and assistant principal meetings	Chief Academic Officer, Executive Directors, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Out of district PD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opportunities to attend conferences (NCAGT, NAGC,</li></ul>	Opportunity offered to all GES with a goal to rotate	Numerous providers

	WCGTC, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webinars by college board, NCSSM, virtual workshops, etc.</li> <li>• Participation in state and regional professional development hosted by NCDPI</li> </ul>	who attends so that multiple teachers are able to participate in out-of-district opportunities	
Parents and Community Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Gifted Advisory Council focuses on a podcast, book study, article, or topic of interest at each of their monthly meetings. Each topic is directly related to supporting gifted children at school and at home.</li> <li>• Our Parent and Caregiver Academy (PAC) has numerous academic sessions each year for parents to learn about the curriculum, supporting their child with math/reading, and support for topics of interest provided by parent surveys such as social media usage, safety online, and community resources</li> </ul>	The GAC has a parent or community member from every school.          All parental PD is open to the public, advertised via our NHCS communications team via social media and sometimes via additional phone messages.	GAC Chair and Co-Chair       Director of Curriculum & Instruction serves on the PAC committee

## 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:** Our Goal is to have all gifted students in elementary, middle school, and high school clustered with teachers who have earned their NHCS Local AIG Credentials or AIG add-on license. NHCS utilizes the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model to guide and make recommendations to school leaders who determine student grouping. This practice of clustering students with a teacher who has earned their AIG credentials supports an increase to student achievement and provides increased opportunity for growth of our highest achieving students. When it is not possible to place an identified AIG student with a teacher who has received the appropriate training, the teacher will participate in the training that school year. Credentialed teachers are encouraged to take the Refresher Module as part of their continuing education toward renewing their NC Teaching License.

K-12 teachers who successfully complete the local AIG credential modules or have attained state licensure for AIG are listed on each school's website. The school GES and/or administrator will document if the credential courses were offered at each school and that students are in classes with teachers who have earned their local credentials or add-on license.

Each school will offer the NHCS AIG credentials modules annually to teachers of gifted students. Depending on teacher enrollment numbers this could be done at the school or district level to increase collaborative conversation among those enrolled. The credential modules are updated as state and county policies change as well as when new research is pertinent.

Our NHCS Local AIG credentials course is a combination of face to face/virtual meetings, Canvas self-paced learning, and independent assignments offered in multiple modules:

- Module 1 - Introduction to Gifted Education
- Module 2 - Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners
- Module 3 - First Steps to Differentiation
- Module 4 - Identification and Development of Students in Underrepresented Populations

While we understand teachers have many professional development requirements and opportunities, we have created this flexible self-paced and face to face credentials course to enhance student learning for our AIG students. We believe this course goes hand in hand with other district and state priorities that compete for our teacher's time and attention.

---

## Practice E

*Develops strategies for the recruitment and retention of AIG-licensed professionals, including those of diverse backgrounds.*

**District Response:** NHCS recognizes the potential to bring unintended biases to the process of recruiting and retaining AIG-licensed professionals. Our Human Resources team takes the lead in recruitment and we search both externally and internally for candidates. We have a process for applications, interviews, and hiring that ensures principals are selecting a candidate that is a right fit for their school.

AIG teachers who already have credentials are highly sought after, but we also hire teachers without the AIG licensure and allow them to earn it within five years in the position. They must complete the in-county credentials within two years of their hire date. This allows us to ensure that having the license is not a barrier to hiring the best candidates, but also ensures that we are putting our strongest candidates forth as potential GES.

Additional AIG Program practices for the recruitment, retention, and advancement of a highly qualified of AIG-licensed professionals include:

- NHCS offers tuition assistance for educators who are currently pursuing or would like to pursue AIG licensure.
- Maintain partnership between the NHCS AIG Program and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington's Watson School of Education Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Program.
- New specialists are partnered with a mentor within the group of county specialists.
- Collaboration time for mentors and mentees occurs outside the district-wide AIG meetings to allow for individualized support.
- Director of C&I maintains the NHCS AIG county training website to provide a central location for all procedures, processes, and paperwork a specialist needs.
- Director of C&I maintains and updates a portfolio of best practices in gifted education that is available to all specialists.
- Director of C&I creates a program culture that is open to change, and regularly steps back to honestly discuss progress and challenges with gifted specialists.
- GESs participate in monthly, virtual PLCs with other gifted specialists

---

## Practice F

*Provides focused professional learning opportunities to realize equity and excellence in gifted education including changing mindsets, policies, and practices.*

**District Response:** NHCS provides ongoing professional development opportunities meant to help expand excellence in our district. These PD options are held for different stakeholders to

ensure that we have impact on mindsets, policy, and practice.

Our AIG program supports sending GES to the NCAGT conference held each year. We believe that engaging in shared learning across the state and nation helps us to reach a level of excellence in our gifted education services and to continually grow for the betterment of our students.

#### **Mindset:**

- Professional development that supports changing mindsets is embedded into the opportunities listed in practice C. We are intentional about including parents in our professional development as well as teachers who are supporting our gifted learners
- Professional development is offered on topics of non-teacher pleasing behaviors and the myths of gifted education, bright vs gifted character traits, and supporting identification for students who may not fit a “typically gifted” model such as a twice-exceptional or multilingual student

#### **Policy:**

- Professional development does not have a direct impact on policy as our policy decisions are governed by our local board of education. However, we have a board member representative on the Gifted Advisory Council which helps to increase the ties between board decisions and student instructions for AIG students.
- At the state level, we support policy decisions through our partnership with NC Advanced Placement Partnership and work closely with our NCAPP representative to support legislation that will positively impact gifted students.

#### **Practice:**

- Professional development that supports reflection and, when necessary, a change in practice is the goal of every PD structure listed in practice C.
- GES collaborate and reflect on their practice in our monthly meeting, but also within regional and/or grade span cohorts to maintain support in changing practices at the school level with the teachers they support.

---

#### **Practice G**

*Aligns professional development opportunities with local AIG program goals, other district initiatives, and best practices in gifted education with opportunities to refine applications of professional learning.*

**District Response:** NHCS Senior Staff, Chief Academic Officer, and the Curriculum & Instruction team set county-wide goals and strategies for academic success and student well-being. The Director of C&I serves as the AIG Supervisor. That role helps to create goals and strategies for GES PD to align with the district's strategic and academic goals, LEA initiatives, and AIG state legislated standards.

GESs meet regularly and then are tasked to return to individual schools to train staff. GESs are trained in facilitating gifted PD so that they can provide the PD at their schools as needed. AIG Professional Development library opportunities include, but not limited to:

- Differentiation: The Basics
- Instructional PD to Increase Rigor for ALL Students
- AIG Booster Shots
- Curriculum Compacting
- Instructional Coaching

The AIG program has also purchased a library collection of gifted education books for each school including, Best Practices in Gifted Education, Jim Knight's Unmistakable Impact, Joyce VanTassel-Baska's Acceleration-Strategies for Teaching Gifted Learners, Tomlinson's Differentiation books, and others. The "train the trainer" PD can occur during all staff meetings, grade level or content area PLCs, or individually with teachers in a 1:1 setting. The decision of which structure GES will use when training is decided at each building based on their school leadership, alignment with school level priorities, and the needs of students and faculty.

At many schools, AIG Specialists are directly involved with the MTSS team for explaining AIG Program goals, aligning them with school and district MTSS goals, and planning and delivering professional learning in order to integrate the perspective of gifted education throughout. Just as students may need tiered services when struggling, gifted students also need tiered services for enrichment, extension, and depth of a standard. Furthermore, we have AIG students who may require multiple services either because they are twice exceptional or because they have a gift in one content area but need academic support in another content area (ex: AG Math, but needs additional academic support in reading to reach grade level proficiency, growth goals, and/or the student's full potential.)

## Standard 5: Partnerships

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

### Practice A

*Develops intentional, two-way partnerships with parents/guardians to support the following needs of AIG students:*

- *academic and intellectual*
- *social and emotional.*

**District Response:** The district is continuously striving to strengthen partnerships with parents/families of nurtured and identified gifted students. NHCS believes that intentional and meaningful relationships with families are crucial for academic and intellectual success as well as the social and emotional well being of our students.

### Current examples of parental partnerships include:

- GESs meet annually with parents to sign students' DEPs. We believe it is best practice to have these reviews face to face, especially at the initial placement and during transition years to establish the home and school partnership.
- When possible, GESs will have information/documents translated and post information in the native language(s) of the represented school population. We also have family liaisons who are able to support Spanish speaking families in face-to-face meetings and arrange for phone based translation for many other languages.
- GESs have annual parent meetings where they explain the AIG program at large and specifics to the school. At the meeting the gifted specialists provide contact information so that they are easily accessible to parents. GESs also collect parent contact information so that they can make email groups for quick and consistent communication with parents. These meetings also allow the school AIG community to build partnerships among families as many families will attend including parents of newly identified AIG students. During this meeting the parents are also able to give feedback about programs and units that their children have enjoyed, receive answers to questions about the overall program, and sign up for volunteer opportunities.
- GESs create and facilitate extracurricular opportunities at their schools to address the unique gifted learners' interests and meet their academic, intellectual, as well as social and emotional needs. Gifted specialists often enlist the expertise of parent volunteers to help facilitate the interests based opportunities for gifted students.
- AIG staff members and parents are encouraged to maintain representation on the School Improvement Team at each school. This team makes decisions that impact the implementation of the AIG plan at the school.
- Families are invited to engage with their child's learning, for example at the end of a unit of study students often present a project or product and families are invited to see that learning in person and celebrate their child's achievements
- At the high school level, GES meet with parents/guardians to review academic blueprints (HS DEP) especially in 9th grade, and then as requested by parents in 10-12th grade.

**District level:**

- The Curriculum and Instruction department recruits parents and community volunteers for events like Math Counts, Science Fair, Battle of the Books, county-wide art events, and Science Olympiad.
  - The Director of Curriculum and Instruction attends and serves as an ex-officio member on the Gifted Advisory Council (GAC), an advocacy group of parents, community members, and educators who meet to advocate for gifted education. Each school has a GAC parent liaison who is invited to attend each GAC meeting and then asked to share the information with other stakeholders at their child's school. More information regarding the GAC, bylaws, and membership can be found on the NHCS AIG website or by emailing [nhcgiftedadvisorycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:nhcgiftedadvisorycouncil@gmail.com) and in Standard 5, practice C.
- 

**Practice B**

*Partners with community stakeholders, such as institutions of higher education, local business and industry partners, and others to enhance and support the local AIG program and services.*

**District Response:** Our district has created strong relationships with community stakeholders. NHCS has been recognized through NCAGT awards for outstanding parent volunteers and business partnerships for their support of NHCS gifted education.

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington has served as a longtime partner with NHCS. Since adding gifted education add-on licensure, UNCW professors have partnered with NHCS Gifted Program on our Gifted Advisory Council. Their support and expertise is greatly valued. The college and school system collaborate to offer the following:

- Professional development to gifted specialists and general education teachers
- GISA (Gifted Informational Sessions and Advocacy) sessions
- STEM opportunities, including hosting the regional science fair
- Isaac Bear Early College High School - Partnership for dual enrollment with UNCW
- Regional support for the SE region meetings
- UNCW professors and staff are part of our GAC meetings, serving as parents and also sharing information related to higher education and/or UNCW. If the GAC had a year in which no parents were connected to UNCW, the GAC would invite the university to send a representative in order to maintain the connection.

Our local community college, CCFC, is also a wonderful partner for advanced learning opportunities. Our students enroll in college level classes, access scaffolded independence by taking courses online and on their local campuses, and support career pathways for CTE.

Additionally, the gifted education specialists have STEM resources and lessons available by the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM) to enhance core instruction for elementary and middle school gifted students in hard-to-teach concepts. NHCS has partnered with NCSSM and may offer Interactive Video Conferencing (IVC) STEM courses to gifted students. Duke Energy STEM night is another partnership that provides STEM materials for our educators and families.

NHCS partners with Wilmington Chess Club to grow and develop students' interest and love for chess.

Community members are invited to attend and take active roles in district events and competitions. Battle of the Books partners with the NHCS Media Coordinators, Science

Olympiad and Science Fair use community members as judges, Mathcounts and History Day use parent coaches and tutors, community members lead AIG Academies and clubs at many of our schools.

---

### **Practice C**

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

**District Response:** The establishment of the Gifted Advisory Council (GAC) is a requirement of the school board and state approved NHCS Gifted Education Plan. Specifically, the NHCS GAC will:

- Monitor the timely and accurate implementation of the AIG plan
- Advocate, communicate, and liaise with businesses and the community at large with respect to AIG in NHCS
- Present, advise, and make recommendations to the NHCS Board of Education with respect to the improvement of the overall AIG program at the district level in a NHCS AIG Program Annual Report

The GAC also offers interactive sessions to all AIG families and provides them the opportunity to learn more about how to support the growth of their gifted child at school, at home and in the community. At least one GAC member assists with the development of the local AIG plan.

The GAC council members will observe the implementation of services at schools across the county and share with stakeholders via three site visits per year. The site visits include an elementary, middle, and high school. In the visits the council members have the opportunity to observe instruction, talk to students, teachers, and staff, and engage with schools about areas of success and areas of opportunity where additional advocacy or partnerships may be needed.

Provide guidance to parents as gifted students promote to higher grades  
Inform families of educational opportunities available to students and provide expert speakers during the interactive sessions.

**Council Members:** The membership of the Council is composed of up to eleven (11) persons.

- 3 employees representing teacher and school building administrators
- No less than 4 parents of children in the school system
- 1 NHCS AIG program alumni
- Not less than 2 community/business representatives

Members shall be approved by the Board of Education. Memberships shall be representative of the diversity (gender, race, geography) of the community.

**Ex-officio members:** The Director of Curriculum and Instruction, an assigned school board member, and an invited high school student representative will serve in a non-voting capacity.

**School Liaisons:** Each school has the opportunity to send a representative who is

considered a part of the GAC organization but not an official voting board member. Liaisons are asked to join the GAC in advocating, sharing, and learning about the NHCS gifted program. Liaison responsibilities:

- Attend GAC meetings
  - Provide communication between GAC and school based AIG stakeholders
- More information regarding the GAC, bylaws, and membership can be found on the NHCS AIG website or by emailing [nhcgiftedadvisorycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:nhcgiftedadvisorycouncil@gmail.com)
- 

## **Practice D**

*Informs all students, parents/guardians, and the community of the following:*

- Local AIG Plan
  - Local AIG program services
  - Policies and procedures relating to advanced learning and gifted education
  - Ways to access advanced learning opportunities
- Communication is ongoing and responds to the diverse language and other needs of the community.*

**District Response:** NHCS AIG program upholds high expectations for communicating with all AIG families and the community at large. Gifted specialists collect parent/guardian contact information and preference at the annual parent informational meeting. The contact information is used to share information with families about available AIG student opportunities. Multiple means of communication are listed below.

- District and school AIG websites (all have links to the NHCS AIG Plan)
- Gifted Advisory Council (GAC)
  - Each school selects one liaison as a representative
  - One NHCS board member is assigned and provides the annual report prepared by the GAC Chair and Co-Chair to the NHCS Board of Education
- Gifted Informational Sessions and Advocacy (GISA)
- Standardized Communication
  - District -wide system emails and phone calls
  - District wide brochures available at each school for consistency across the LEA
  - District parent letters regarding screening, referral, and identification
- School-based Communication
  - Smore newsletters, which includes translation in multiple languages
  - Annual, school-based informational meetings -all schools use the district presentation template. (Presentations are posted on each school site for families who were unable to attend the informational meeting.)
  - High School transition family events to learn about AP, IB, Dual Enrollment and advance academic opportunities at the high school
  - Utilization of local media and social media to share good news about student accomplishments and other pertinent information.

NHCS honors that families may need translation services to access information in their home language as often as and whenever possible. County translators are utilized for native language services. NHCS has a system in place for all translation needs, including AIG program documents and forms, to be shared in appropriate languages by completing a NHCS Translation Request Form. If a parent has additional communication needs, they can contact the school directly for support.

## Standard 6: Program Accountability

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

### 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]) based on a comprehensive program evaluation. This local AIG plan has been approved by the local board of education and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.*

**District Response:** The New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) Director of Curriculum & Instruction coordinates the writing and implementation of a gifted plan based on the NC AIG standards. The written plan is reviewed by stakeholders and revised as needed. The plan is also presented to the LEA school board for review and approval. Once the school board approves the plan, it is submitted to SBE/DPI for review and comment.

A comprehensive review of the plan prior to revision includes:

- Student data from EOG, EOC, AP/IB Exam including both proficiency and growth
- DPI feedback from previous plans
- GES feedback on updated or revised standards
- GES feedback on strengths and weaknesses of the program
- GAC noted concerns, celebrations, and frequent parent questions

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction elicits feedback from stakeholders as part of program evaluation, including but not limited to parents, Gifted Advisory Committee (GAC), school and district administrators, Gifted Education Specialist (GES), students, and teachers and other support staff. Once a draft is completed it is shared with stakeholders for feedback and to improve clarity.

An AIG Plan Writing Team uses stakeholder feedback to update the AIG Plan every three years. The team is made up of

- At least 3 Gifted Education Specialists representing elementary, middle, and high
- At least two school administrators (serving different grade bands)
- At least one parent/GAC member
- The supervisor of specialty programs

The chair of the GAC and the Chief Academic Officer are also invited to be part of the plan writing team. If they select not to be part of the committee, they still receive the draft versions when communicated to all committee members so they can remain informed of the committee's recommendations.

NHCS AIG program embraces continual improvement. As part of this effort, the AIG staff regularly evaluates the effectiveness of the AIG plan and gifted programs by:

- Completing reflections and needs assessment of the AIG plan and program
  - This includes three site visits a year by our GAC to schools to support AIG instruction
- Continuously reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the AIG plan in standard based groups
- Purposeful and planned review by the GAC and individual school liaisons from each elementary, middle, and high school.
- Follow an AIG plan compliance checklist that is created from the plan after BOE approval and signed by the GES and principal each year

A copy of the completed NHCS AIG Plan is linked on each school's AIG website, the district AIG website, and can be found on DPI's website. In addition, each school site houses a hard copy of the LEAs AIG Plan.

---

## **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:** The district has developed structures and processes for monitoring the implementation of the local AIG program and plan.

An AIG Site Monitoring Tool is used to reflect on the implementation for each state standard. This checklist is created after approval of this plan by our board of education with the “to do” items from each standard along with the primary person(s) responsible. To increase fidelity and consistency in AIG programs, this data is used at the school level to set improvement targets and at the district level to inform the need for professional development and/or resources. The site visit reviews are shared with the school, and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. The site monitoring tool prompts reflection that mirrors the FAM-S process where schools reflect on their alignment to MTSS policies, produces, and practices at the close of each school year.

In addition, the goal of fidelity and consistency is supported by implementing the following monitoring systems:

- BOY AIG checklist for all GES
- EOY AIG checklist for all GES, including reflection survey
- Annual materials Inventory for elementary, middle and high school levels
- Site-based AIG Monthly Highlights created by gifted specialists and shared with site administration
- AIG Identification Folder and Procedures Checklist
- AIG Nomination and Identification Timeline
- District Match Team Training and Attestation form
- Standardized District AIG Annual Parent Presentation
- AIG Training Scheduling Calendar
- Ongoing data reviews after NCCI, universal screeners, and end of year testing

The GAC schedules 3 school visits to support the consistent implementation of the local AIG plan. The aim is to visit multiple grade bands each year across the site visits. The GAC writes an annual report with recommendations for strengthening the AIG program. The GAC annual report is presented to the NHCS Board of Education by our assigned board representative.

---

## **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:** State funds are allotted each July 1 for the local AIG programming. Additional local funds are allotted to pay salaries for gifted specialists at each K-8 school and two specialists shared between the four traditional high schools. The district's Chief Finance Officer and finance team maintains and oversees the allotted budget for the AIG program, particularly budget records for certified salaries.

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction maintains and oversees allotted budgets for AIG programs, staff development, resources, and materials. Budget decisions about professional

development, resources, and equipment are driven by the AIG needs assessment, student data, and LEA initiatives. Documentation of the budget is reviewed annually by the district's Chief Finance Officer and the finance department. We advocate for use of other funding sources, such as local monies, federal monies, grant funds, and business partnerships, to meet the needs of the AIG program and its learners.

We have financial procedures set up to ensure we follow all fiscal responsibilities including a multiple step approval system for purchase orders and P-Card purchases, alignment of digital resources to data protection laws, and standardized contracts for services.

---

## **Practice D**

*Maintains and analyzes multiple sources of student achievement and growth data, as well as annual dropout data for AIG students. Data is disaggregated to recognize patterns and trends over time and inform mindsets, policies, and practices for equity and excellence.*

**District Response:** The GES, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, and other district staff collaborate to collect and analyze AIG student performance growth data. Our multiple sources of data include:

- District and state level universal screeners and progress monitoring
- Classroom and content common formative assessments
- End of grade, End of course, AP/IB Exams
- EVAAS growth
- AIG student drop out rate
- Pre-ACT, PSAT, and high school level standardized assessments
- Number of students accepted to North Carolina Governor's School
- Number of students participating in Dual Enrollment
- NCSSM (including acceptance to residential programs, interactive video conferences, and online courses)

AIG growth data will be reported through the NC Schools Report Cards in schools that have an AIG subgroup as defined by the state.

Analyzing and reviewing data for trends and to inform continuous improvement cycles is an ongoing process that occurs at all grade levels. Data analysis is done individually by classroom teachers in addition to in collaboration with GES for a focus on AIG identified students. This data disaggregation informs direct classroom practices and next steps for the children. This level of data analysis is often what supports mindset changes in individual classroom teachers as they look at the outcomes and trends for their own classroom.

Data is reviewed between principals and their executive director and/or Director of Curriculum & Instruction and/or Chief Academic Officer to inform their school wide goals and the proficiency and growth of AIG students in their building across teachers and grade levels. This building level data also helps to inform practices and helps school leaders set up structures within their building in response to the data from their students and teachers.

Data is also reviewed at the district level and disaggregated to note trends that inform professional development, guidance from senior staff and/or our board of education, and progress towards our district strategic plan goals. This data can help to inform mindsets, practices, and policies in advocating for our gifted students.

---

## Practice E

*Maintains and analyzes multiple data sources focused on the referral, identification, services, and retention of students within the local AIG program to ensure that students' racial, ethnic, economic, or other demographic factors, including other exceptionalities and language differences, do not reduce their likelihood of access to and participation in gifted education.*

**District Response:** The district firmly believes in advancing excellence for all and that no child should be discriminated against for participation in the AIG program because of their racial, ethnic, economic, or any demographic factor.

We first ensure our program has standardized identification practices (see Standard 1). We have multiple pathways to identification to ensure that giftedness is seen and identified in our students. We have made changes such as adding additional pathways for non-verbal aptitude assessments (Nagelari) and working in collaboration with our special education and multilingual departments to ensure we are looking for indicators of giftedness in potentially twice exceptional or multilingual students (in alignment with guidance from NCDPI). No demographic data is used to determine the match team rating of a student nor the services provided once they have been identified as gifted. We also have provided a GES at each K-8 school to ensure every child in K-3 has access to nurturing and that identified students in 3-8 have a GEs directly in their building.

Our data sources include:

- **Referral** - COGAT, ITBS, ACCESS, student portfolios, teacher, parent, and student (self-referrals) match team records
- **Identification** - AIG headcount
- **Services** - Achievement and Growth Data (see Practice D)
- **Retention** -- Achievement and Growth Data (see Practice D)

All gifted specialists in grades K-8 collaborate with ML, EC, and classroom teachers to generate an 'at potential' list of students for potential gifted program services. The data is compiled and shared at the district level. Our transition documents, which are used when students transition to middle and/or high school, include high achieving students who are showing potential and students who have participated in talent development opportunities.

---

## Practice F

*Maintains and utilizes current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving K-12 AIG students to align with the goals and strategies outlined in the local AIG plan.*

**District Response:** The Human Resource Department will monitor the certification of gifted education specialists to ensure that licensed high quality and trained personnel are serving AIG students. HR provides a list each year to the director of Curriculum & Instruction with staff certification data that lists the county's GES's training levels including: degrees earned, AIG licensure data, and national board certification as well as their role/location within NHCS.

GES and the school administrators will also monitor the teachers at each school who have completed training to work with gifted students or the New Hanover County AIG Credentials for teachers. These rosters will be communicated to administrators for AIG student placement options and teachers who have earned their credentials will be posted on each AIG specialist's school website.

---

## Practice G

*Elicits regular feedback from students, parents/guardians, families, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the ongoing implementation and effectiveness of the local AIG program to support continuous program improvement.*

**District Response:** NHCS AIG program utilizes survey data from parents/families, teachers and/or other stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the local AIG program to support continuous program improvement.

GAC site visits include informal interviews with students in regards to the effectiveness of the LEA's AIG program. Parent feedback is solicited from GAC liaisons. Survey data and student outcomes data are used as an ongoing reflection tool and for program assessment.

---

## Practice H

*Shares local AIG program evaluation data with school and district personnel, students, parents/guardians, families, and other community stakeholders.*

**District Response:** Evaluation data is shared through multiple outlets including, but not limited to:

- NHCS Website
  - GAC meetings
  - Principal Meetings
  - GES meetings
  - The GAC annual report is shared by a board member each year with the entire board in a publicly held and recorded meeting
- 

## Practice I

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

### **District Response:**

During the identification process, parental consent is gathered before student testing. If the student is not identified and will not receive services, the parents receive a letter informing them of their child's scores along with the steps we will take to continue to wait and watch their child for future opportunities to be reevaluated for AIG.

If identified, the Match Team Record and the student DEP is sent home for signature upon the initial identification and then is sent again to be reviewed at yearly parent meetings and/or sent home for approval signature as part of consent for identification and services. We accept digital signatures to support families who are unable to come to the building for an in-person meeting with the GES.

The district has forms and procedures in place for student transfers, re-assessment and nominations. The district has also established transfer policies for students from other LEAs as documented in Standard One. We do not follow any process of "un-gifting" a student who transfers into NHCS.

In accordance with Article 9B, NHCS has a procedure for resolving disagreements between

parents and the school system when a child is not identified for the AIG program or concerning the appropriateness of the service options offered to an identified AIG student. These procedures relate to the processes of student referral, evaluation, identification, and the availability of approved service options. The county procedures for resolving disagreements are provided to parents once an identification decision has been made. In addition, this information is reviewed with parents at the annual review meetings. The process also aligns to the Parent Bills of Rights

### **Procedures to Resolve Disagreement with Gifted Placement Options Or Identification:**

If a parent has a disagreement with the gifted services within a classroom or with determination of giftedness, the following steps should be taken:

1. The parent/guardian should meet with the classroom teacher and/or GES to seek a resolution.
2. If this meeting does not resolve the issue, the parent/guardian should document the concerns in a letter, outlining the parent's perspective of the situation, to the school principal requesting a written response within ten working days.
3. If a resolution is not reached, the school-based AIG Match Team should schedule a meeting to review the problem and conference with school administration.
4. If a resolution is not reached at the school level, parents/guardians should contact the following Central Office staff to seek a resolution in the order listed:
  - a. NHCS Director of Curriculum and Instruction
  - b. NHCS Executive Director assigned to that child's school
  - c. Chief Academic Officer
  - d. Superintendent
5. After these opportunities, if the grievance is not resolved through the Superintendent's review, the parents/guardians may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of NC General Statutes. 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 and/or intellectually gifted student, or (ii) whether the local plan developed has been implemented appropriately with regard to the child. Following a hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusion 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.

Attorney's fees are not available to parents/guardians in the event they decide on due process.



# NOTES



# NOTES



# NOTES



# NOTES