



GRIFFITH
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

High Ability Handbook



Visit Our Website
www.griffithps.org

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MISSION-DEFINITIONS-TERMINOLOGY

MISSION

Griffith Public Schools commits to identifying students that meet the parameters of high ability distinctions. It is our desire to challenge said students by providing them enriching experiences, differentiated curriculum, and educational opportunities that are designed to meet their intellectual needs and hone their academic potential. As a district, we recognize these learners are found in all socio-economic, cultural, and ethnic groups and we will create an environment that incorporates their social emotional needs.

HIGH ABILITY DEFINED

Indiana Code defines a student as high ability if they perform at or shows the potential for performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivations, or interests. (20-36-1-3)

Noteworthy Points

- Indiana Law: Since July 1, 2007, Indiana schools have been required to identify students with high ability in the general intellectual and specific academic domains and provide them with appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction in core content areas, K-12 (refer to IC- 20-36-2-2).
- Specific identification processes remain a local decision and will vary according to district size, building configurations, demographics, etc.
- The terms “gifted” and “high ability” are used interchangeably.



PANTHER PRIDE

TERMINOLOGY

Giftedness

- According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: Students, children or youth who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities. Note: States and districts are not required to use the federal definition, although many states base their definitions on the federal definition.

Measures of Ability (Aptitude or Potential)

- A norm-referenced test is used to determine an individual's status with respect to the performance of other individuals on that test.
- Criterion-referenced achievement tests are used to determine the individual's mastery of specific skills or knowledge.

Measures of Achievement (or Performance)

- Achievement tests measure acquired information, and therefore will not likely be reliable predictors of high ability for K-2 students living in impoverished environments.

Percentiles

- A statistical measure of distribution. For a given set of data, it is the level below which a certain percentage of the data falls. For example, if a student has a percentile ranking at the 50th percentile on a standardized assessment, it means that he or she scored higher than 49 percent of all the students who took the same exam. In the previous example a percentage score of 50% would equate to a failing performance, while a student scoring at the 50th percentile is demonstrating average performance.

Percentages

- A representation of a proportion out of 100. If a student receives a 50% on a spelling test, his/her performance would be considered failing as the student was only able to respond correctly half of the time.

Standard Error of Measure (SEM)

- Is closely associated with the error variance in a test or experiment which indicates the amount of variability in a test administered to a group that is caused by measurement error.



MEET OUR TEACHERS

High Ability Coordinator

Ambre Cain

Elementary Teachers

Lauren Andree
Kristina Kostides
Jessica Lichtenfeld
Dana Luyster
Julie Porras
Brittany Valdez

Jr./Sr. High School AP/Honors Teachers

Kristin Arras
Danielle Barenie
Lisa Driscoll
Jenna Golfis
Amy Skura

Matt Adams
Jenna Berzy
Janet Freeman
Julie Larson
Jaime Mattel
Monica Nieves
Jim Pickett
Jeff Swisher
Chris Tomcsi
Julie Wencloff

SERVICE COORDINATION FOR HIGH ABILITY

The District High Ability Coordinator communicates directly with the following groups:

- **Broad-Based Planning Committee** – Meets with this committee to review the continuous development and implementation of the district’s high ability services and programs.
- **Counselors** – Consultation about their role in providing effective education and college/career readiness skills to high ability students.
- **Business Office Personnel** – Meets with this department to complete the cash request form and update funds spent/remaining for any amendments and the final report.
- **IDOE Office of High Ability Education** – All important information regarding programming and grant supports.
- **Identification Committee** – Meet with this committee to review student level data required to support placement in high ability programs.
- **Parents** – Respond to questions/concerns about the district’s high ability programs and services. Provide current information on the high ability website.
- **Principals** – Provide a list of identified high ability students and inform of professional development opportunities specific to high ability. NOTE: Identification is done at the corporation level and not the building level.
- **Special Education Department Personnel** – Inform about updates on student’s progress throughout the program.
- **Superintendent/School Leaders** – Inform the leadership team of high ability professional development opportunities, as well as high ability programs, services, and updates.
- **Teachers** – Provide a list of identified high ability students with high ability designation, and notify them of high ability specific professional development opportunities.
- **Technology Department Personnel** – Connect with this department to ensure accurate submission of reports and maintenance of current an easily accessible high ability information on the corporation website.

IDENTIFICATION PATHWAYS FOR GRADES 1-5

Each year, a committee will review current achievement data and/or High Ability Recommendation Forms for students who are not identified but may be in need of high ability services.

CogAT (Cognitive Abilities Test) is administered mid-way through the year to students in grade K, 2, 5, 7, and 9. The CogAT measures three different cognitive abilities:

- 1) The verbal section measures a child's ability to remember and transform sequences of English words, to understand them and to make inferences and judgments about them.
- 2) The quantitative section measures a child's understanding of basic quantitative concepts and relationships.
- 3) The non-verbal section measures reasoning using pictures and geometric shapes. This section reduces the impact of language on the student's score.

The composite score is a total score for all three batteries. CogAT identifies potential, adaptive, and qualitative abilities. Unlike other achievement tests, CogAT does not measure how much a student has learned but focuses instead on a student's ability to display cognitive abilities that research has associated with academic success. These abilities include reasoning and problem solving using verbal, quantitative and spatial (non-verbal) methods to find the answers.

All students in grades K-12 are also given the NWEA assessment during the fall, winter, and spring. This assesses the general academic performance in reading, language arts and mathematics. For our district, we look at percentile scores that range from 90-99 in order to qualify for entrance into the high ability program.

Another qualitative component is the teacher recommendation. Teachers have a detailed form they complete to differentiate between a gifted student and a high achieving student.

Committee Purpose & Members

Identify students with high ability in all grades, K-12, in accordance with the Indiana definition of a high ability student.

- Mrs. Ambre Cain, Principal & High Ability Coordinator, Beiriger Elementary
- Mrs. Lauren Andree, High Ability Teacher, Beiriger Elementary
- Ms. Kristina Kostides, High Ability Teacher, Wadsworth Elementary
- Mrs. Jessica Lichtenfeld, Lead High Ability Teacher, Beiriger Elementary
- Ms. Dana Luyster, High Ability Teacher, Beiriger Elementary
- Mrs. Julie Porras, High Ability Teacher, Beiriger Elementary
- Mrs. Brittany Valdez, High Ability Teacher, Wadsworth Elementary

IDENTIFICATION PATHWAYS FOR GRADES 1-5

There are four pathways the High Ability Committee considers when identifying students for the elementary school program. Students must meet all the requirements in at least one of the pathways listed:

PATHWAY #1

- 95 or higher on CogAT VQN Composite (age and grade percentiles, if not on both, teacher recommendation is required)

PATHWAY #2

- 90 or higher on CogAT VQN Composite (age percentile) *PLUS* 90th achievement percentile or higher on BOTH NWEA math and reading

PATHWAY #3

- 90 or higher on CogAT VQN Composite (age percentile) *PLUS* teacher recommendation

PATHWAY #4

- 93rd achievement percentile or higher on math and/or reading NWEA *PLUS* Teacher recommendation.

IDENTIFIED EXCEPTIONALITIES

- Students who score within a 5-point range to above scores and identified exceptionality, i.e. IEP, 504, ELL, will be considered per state requirements.
- Students who have been retained must qualify based on a given pathway and the high ability committee will discuss their placement for the coming year.



Parent Meeting

If a student qualifies for the program, parents are sent an invitation to attend a High Ability presentation. During the presentation, they will be informed of the mission, policies, program pillars, entry pathways, expectations, entrance and exiting procedures, and the appeals process. Families are fully informed of how our program is different from a general education setting.

IDENTIFICATION PATHWAYS FOR GRADES 6–8

There are three pathways the High Ability Committee considers when identifying students for the middle school program. Students must meet all the requirements in at least one of the pathways listed:

PATHWAY #1

- 95 or higher on CogAT VQN Composite in either math, ELA, or both.

PATHWAY #2

Qualification will be based on a point system with a maximum score of fifteen (15). Students that score between twelve (12) and fifteen (15) qualify for the program. Students that score nine (9) to eleven (11) will require a teacher recommendation.

Assessment (5)

COGAT–most current score

- 94% in Quantitative/Verbal 5 points
- 93% in Quantitative/Verbal 4 points
- 92% in Quantitative/Verbal 3 points
- 90–91% in Quantitative/Verbal 2 points
- 80–89% in Quantitative/Verbal 1 point

ILEARN–score from previous year

- Above Proficiency in Math/ELA 3 points
- At Proficiency in Math/ELA 2 points

Grades (5)–for Q1, Q2, and Q3

- Range would bottom out at 80%
- 95+% in Math/ELA 5 points
- 89–94% in Math/ELA 4 point
- 85–88% in Math/ELA 3 point
- 82–84% in Math/ELA 2 point
- 80–81% in Math/ELA 1 point

Attendance (5)–for Q1, Q2, and Q3

- 95+% 5 points
- Below 95%, automatic need for teacher recommendation

PATHWAY #3

Students that score nine (9) to eleven (11) based on the points above will require a teacher recommendation.

IDENTIFIED EXCEPTIONALITIES

- Students who score within a 5-point range to above scores and identified exceptionality, i.e. IEP, 504, ELL, will be considered per state requirements.
- Students who have been retained must qualify based on a given pathway and the high ability committee will discuss their placement for the coming year.

IDENTIFICATION PATHWAY FOR GRADES 9-12

Students may request honors/advanced/AP placement through their School Counselor during scheduling. Requests must be supported through standardized test results, grades and/or work samples which demonstrate potential success within the course.

Assessment scores, grade data, and attendance data will be considered when looking at enrollment in honors/advanced/AP.

Should a question regarding placement arise, the following point system should be used to determine eligibility.

Qualification will be based on a point system with a maximum score of fifteen (15). Students that score between twelve (12) and fifteen (15) qualify for the program. Students that score nine (9) to eleven (11) will require a teacher recommendation.

PSAT/SAT

- 10th: 460+ in math; 430+ in reading 5 points
- 11th: 510+ in math; 460+ in reading 5 points
- 10th: 450+ in math; 420+ in reading 4 points
- 11th: 500+ in math; 450+ in reading 4 points
- 10th: 440+ in math; 410+ in reading 3 points
- 11th: 490+ in math; 450+ in reading 3 points
- 10th: 430+ in math; 400+ in reading 2 points
- 11th: 480+ in math; 440+ in reading 2 points
- 10th: 420+ in math; 390+ in reading 1 point
- 11th: 470+ in math; 430+ in reading 1 point

Grades (5)

- Range would bottom out at 80%
- 95+% in Math/ELA 5 points
- 89-94% in Math/ELA 4 point
- 85-88% in Math/ELA 3 point
- 82-84% in Math/ELA 2 point
- 80-81% in Math/ELA 1 point

Attendance (5)

- 95+% 5 points
- Below 95%, automatic need for teacher recommendation

IDENTIFIED EXCEPTIONALITIES

- Students who score within a 5-point range to above scores and identified exceptionality, i.e. IEP, 504, ELL, will be considered per state requirements.
- Students who have been retained must qualify based on a given pathway and the high ability committee will discuss their placement for the coming year.

COMMON ASSESSMENTS FOR IDENTIFICATION

The type of assessments utilized for high ability identification will vary by school districts. Below, you will find types of assessments that are commonly used to identify high ability students.

Measures of Ability (Group)

- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
- Differential Ability Scales (DAS-2)
- InView
- PSAT

Measures of Ability (Individual)

Verbal Tests:

- Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI-2)
- Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Scale (UNIT-2)
- Stanford-Binet 5th edition (SB-5)
- Wechsler Preschool Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI-IV)
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-V)
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities (WJ-IV Cog)

Nonverbal Tests:

- Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT-3)
- Comprehensive Test of Nonverbal Intelligence (CTONI-2)
- Universal Nonverbal Intelligence Scale (UNIT-2)
- Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT 8)

Measures of Achievement

- Iowa Assessments
- i-Ready
- Northwest Evaluation Association Tests (NWEA)
 - Achievement Screeners
 - ILEARN
- Terra Nova

Standardized Rating Scales for Math & Language Arts

- Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS)

Standardized Rating Scales for Leadership, Creativity & Motivation

- The Gifted Evaluation Scales (GES)

Assessments Utilized by GPS

- CogAT
- NWEA
- PSAT
- ILEARN (6-8 grade)



IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS NEW TO THE DISTRICT

Students new to Griffith Public Schools may be eligible to participate in the high ability program if they provide achievement data from his/her previous school that indicates they are performing significantly above grade level.

High ability placement in a previous district does not ensure an automatic placement in Griffith Public Schools High Ability Program, as school districts often have different measures and criteria for placement. If a student's previous data does not warrant entry into the GPS program, the student will be tested during normal testing windows in the current year. If requirements are met, they will be placed into the program the following year.

IDENTIFYING STUDENTS FOR GRADE SKIPPING

There are times when a student's academic needs are not being met in their current academic placement and acceleration to another grade level may be warranted. An achievement test approved by the superintendent will be used by a committee consisting of parents, principal, the High Ability Coordinator, and teachers to assist in making the best decision for the student.

IDENTIFICATION APPEALS PROCESS

Parents are able to appeal the decision of the program if they feel their child should be placed in the program. Written notice of their appeal must be received via email, hand delivery, or postmarked by May 15th. The appeal must be made in writing to the principal with new evidence supporting the appeal. This new evidence will not be the principal retesting outside normal testing windows, or re-evaluating the student's current data, thereby overturning the committee's decision. Evidence that is also not considered are: above proficiency on ILEARN, high grades, teacher only recommendations, and/or high benchmarks within a teacher's classroom. An alternative measure of ability and/or achievement will need to be provided with the written appeal. If such evidence is delivered to the principal, a committee consisting of administrators, educators, teachers licensed in high ability will reconvene to discuss the evidence and placement. Parents will be notified in writing of the results of the appeal.

Further Consideration for Identification

Students who score within a 5-point range to above scores with an identified twice exceptionality, i.e., IEP, 504, ELL, will be considered. A diverse committee will discuss the students, their scores, and their teacher recommendations. This way if there are any other parameters unknown to the committee, like homelessness, ADHD, etc., that student is given latitude on scores that benchmark closely to the defined scores.

2025 IDENTIFICATION SCHEDULE

January

- CogAT Testing Grades K, 2, 5, 7, and 9

March

- Deadline for Scale for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) to be returned to child's school. Late submissions will not be accepted (individual students)

April

- Broad Based Planning Committee Meeting
- Assessment information and preliminary placement determinations sent home

May

- Identification Committee Meeting
- Elementary and middle school appeal submissions due
- Honors course requests determination meeting for high school students
- Elementary and middle school placement committees review and rule on appeals
- Elementary and middle school parents notified of appeal status
- Elementary notices of continuing in the program sent home
- Elementary parent meeting for new entries into the program

SERVICE OPTIONS FOR HIGH ABILITY STUDENTS

The following service options are the most common for gifted learners:

- **Self-Contained Classrooms:** In this model all of the students in the class have been identified as high ability, and all of the instruction can be at the appropriate pace and level. This model provides the most opportunity for appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction in core content areas.
- **Between-Class Ability Grouping by Subject Area:** In this model, the schedule is constructed so that all students at the grade level have math at the same time and all have language arts at the same time. During the two subject specific times, students are grouped at their instructional level with the identified high ability learners in the same group with a teacher trained in high ability supports. The remainder of the day, students would be in heterogeneous classrooms.
- **Modified-Cluster Grouping:** In this model, students are grouped to provide a narrowed instructional range in each class; however, all classes have a group of grade-level learners. One class has high ability and a group of grade-level learners. Other classes have some above grade-level students, a grade-level group, and some below grade-level students. This model requires fidelity of implementation to remain true to the model throughout the year (with transfers in and out).
- **Split Grade Level (Multi-Grade Level) Class:** In this model, students are grouped from two or more consecutive grade levels within the same classroom. A high ability teacher will work with identified students to differentiate and provide instruction to all students with a shared curriculum.
- **Pull-out Groups:** In this model, students are removed from their regular classroom to participate in a special group with other high ability students. A high ability teacher or aide works with identified students to differentiate and move beyond typical grade level standards.

Noteworthy Points

When planning appropriate programming and services for students of high ability, Griffith Public School considers:

- How high ability students will be grouped, organized, or provided supports for the most effective learning;
- What training the teacher has or needs to most effectively teach and plan learning experiences for students of high ability;
- What content, standards, and pace are most appropriate for these students; and
- What instructional models, strategies, projects, and products are most appropriate for promoting academic growth.

SERVICE OPTIONS FOR HIGH ABILITY STUDENTS

The following service options are provided for Griffith Public Schools high ability students:

- **Elementary** : students may identify as high ability in math, language arts, or both.
 - Students in kindergarten are identified for high ability services during the second semester. Their regular classroom teacher will monitor students for the duration of the school year.
 - Students in grades 1-5 who have been identified as high ability in math or language arts will be placed in a classroom containing only identified high ability students or a classroom made up of a cluster or identified students as well as students who are not identified as high ability. The make-up of the classroom will be determined by the number of identified students at each grade level in the building. The curriculum in both classroom models has been designed for high ability students. If a student is identified as high ability in only one subject area, they will participate in the high ability curriculum for that subject only.
- **Middle School**: students are also identified as high ability in math, language arts, or both. Students will participate in specialized curriculum designed for identified high ability students or a classroom made up of a cluster or identified students as well as students who are not identified as high ability.
- **High School**: students are identified as high ability in math, language arts, or both. Students will enroll in Honors courses, Dual Credit courses, Advanced Placement courses depending on graduation path.



ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR HIGH ABILITY STUDENTS

Academic Bowl: Offered to interested students in grades 9–12 after school three days per week during competition season.

Advisory: Provided to all students in grades 6–12; HA students participate in literature circles for 25 minutes each day.

College & Career Counseling: Provided to all students in grades 1–5 four times per year for 45 minutes. Provided by appointment only when requested by students in grades 6–12.

Genius Hour: Provided to all HA students in grades 1–5 three days per week.

Internships & Mentorships: Offered to interested students in grades 11–12 (scheduling times vary depending on earned credit hours).

Math Bowl: Offered to interested students in grades 4–5 after school for 16 1-hour sessions.

Exploration of Music Theory: Provided once per week to HA students in grades 1–5 for 45 minutes. Provided daily to all grade 7 HA students and offered to other students in grade 7 that are interested.

Robotics: Offered to all elementary high ability students as apart of the general intellectual curriculum. Offered to interested students in grades 4–5 after school for 16 1-hour sessions. Offered to interested students in grades 9–12 after school three days per week during competition season.

Science Bowl: Offered to interested students in grades 4–5 after school for 16 1-hour sessions.

Science Olympiad: Offered to interested students in grades 9–12 after school three days per week during competition season.

Spell Bowl: Offered to interested students in grades 4–5 after school for 16 1-hour sessions.

Spanish: Provided to all students once per week in grades 3–5 for 45 minutes. Offered to students in grades 8–12 daily for 45 minutes.

Social Emotional Counseling: Provided bi-annually to HA students in grades 1–5. Provided to HA students in grades 6–12 once per week.

Visual & Performing Art: Offered to interested students in grades 3–5 after school for 16 1-hour sessions during the first and second semester. Offered to interested students in grades 6–12 (rehearsal and meeting times vary).

GRADES 1-5

Our high ability students have a different curriculum from general education. The curriculum incorporates the usage of project-based learning, robotics, and STEM. Students learn best when engaged and are able to interact with their environment. They can build their own definition of concepts and themes, which are more meaningful because they are related to their own experiences and memories. Simply put, it all comes down to constructivism, which means a person builds knowledge and meaning from interactions between their experiences and ideas (the environment they work/play in and the people and objects they interact with). Students begin inferencing and working out real world problems and solutions as they use robotics and projects.

Students also move at an accelerated pace in both ELA and math. The Singapore Math Curriculum was adopted during the 2022-2023 school year, while all other students use Reveal. Students also work through the McGraw-Hill program, Aleks. This computer-based program is designed to meet students at their individualized math instruction. Students begin at their current grade level. As they master those skills, they advance to the next grade level. It is our high ability teachers' goal to have his/her class complete the current grade level standards by winter break so they can push students ahead in the curriculum, while continuing to master state expectations. The McGraw-Hill Wonders reading curriculum was adopted for all of our students for the 2023-2024 school year. Teachers have provided reading instruction at an accelerated pace with above grade level texts. Students must complete novel studies, literature circles, and projects along with the established curriculum. Our staff currently incorporates the following programs within the high ability classroom: Achieve 3000, ALEKS, Redbird math, and Red Bird ELA. These programs push students forward at a higher pace while teaching the standards needed at their grade level. Lastly, students are expected to have a different acade-

Program Pillars

- Content (advanced)
- Critical thinking
- Creative thinking
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Commitment
- Confidence
- Community

Differentiation

- Accelerated curriculum
- Differentiated specials
- Robotics
- Foreign language
- Public speaking
- Focus on creation
 - Audio visual editing
 - Projects
- Social emotional learning

mic vocabulary beyond their state assessed vocabulary. This vocabulary is expanded along with incorporating a higher reading level to create more opportunities for utilizing context clues, dissecting affixes, and studying Greek and Latin roots.

Differentiation is a top priority within each teacher's classroom. Student choice plays a large role in projects. All high ability classes take part in Genius Hour, or passion projects. The idea originated from Google where employees could explore their own personal areas of interest to be more productive in the workplace. Students can explore topics of interest not covered in the traditional grade level curriculum. This is their opportunity to become an expert on the topic through intensive research. Students then build a presentation about their topic choice to teach their peers. Along with the presentation, students also need an application portion where they immerse themselves in their topics. For example, if a student studies poetry, they may create their own book of poetry of the styles they researched. Genius Hour builds creativity, community, and ownership over one's education.

Our high ability teachers attended STEM training to learn how to better incorporate STEM into the everyday classroom. Teachers work together to develop a curriculum that fosters problem solving, a growth mindset, and creative solutions. These lessons can be incorporated into our current curriculum to further push student's thinking about grade level material. The Engineering Design Process is heavily focused on throughout these lessons filled with creativity and problem solving.

To correlate with the STEM lessons, robotics is a large component of our high ability classes. Students can work independently or with a partner on a robotics task correlated to what is being taught at their grade level. We also use the robotics kits to gain a sense of community amongst the high ability classes in our district. Students participate in a Thanksgiving Day parade based off Balloons Over Broadway, a winter robotic play skit, building derby cars, and launchers. All grades 1-5 gather together to display their builds and compete to win a challenge. Not only does this build engagement across the district, but it also cultivates teamwork and problem solving on a larger scale. Again, this shows how we are not just pushing students ahead, but rather taking on the same topics and deepening their understanding and applying problem solving skills in a real-world way.

different goals for our program. This past year, we have focused on our sense of community and bringing the local community into what we are working on in our building. We have invited guest speakers for College Go Week to discuss different careers students are interested in. From hearing from student athletes, computer science employees, dentists, professors, police officers, etc. students saw how the habits they are working on now can play a huge part in their future. We have also involved the community with our Holidays Around the World Showcase. Students discuss a country's holiday recipes, traditions, music, games, etc.

Along with bringing the community into our program, field trips are also an integral part of our curriculum. Teachers want to expose students to as many real-life applications as possible. Teachers want students to see themselves in these different roles they dream of becoming. Trips to museums, historical societies, plays, universities, and presentations by authors are just a few different ways students are exposed to real world applications.

Our high ability curriculum also focuses on ways to help improve social emotional learning and ways to help our twice exceptional learners. We have weekly meetings with our school counselor to focus on any area that a specific class needs help in. Teachers also provide students with multiple opportunities to present their findings through presentations and speaking opportunities. It can be overwhelming for some of our students to speak in front of others, but they know it is part of the curriculum and though they may feel intimidated in the beginning years, eventually it becomes second nature. Even their classmates begin to cheer them on or help others if they know a student struggles with something specific. Due to the small class size and the groups traveling yearly with each other, students can be invested in their peer's success.

GRADES 6-8

Our honors curriculum is the following for the different areas:

English Honors

McGraw Hill Study Sync Print and Digital bundle (based on grade level)

- Redbird ELA
- Achieve 3000

Math Honors

- Cengage Big Ideas: Modeling Real Life (based on grade level)
- Cengage Big Ideas: Algebra 1 with CalcChat/Calcview Premium
- Aleks
- RedBird Math

GRADES 9–12

Our honors and AP curriculum is the following for the different areas:

English

Honors

- McGraw Hill Study Sync Print and Digital bundle (based on grade-level)
- Achieve 3000

AP

- Uncharted Territory (AP Seminar)
- They Say, I Say (AP Seminar)
- Structure, Sound and Sense (AP Literature)

Dual Credit

- Writing Analytically (Advanced Composition)
- Students Guide to Writing College Papers (Advanced Composition)

Math

Honors

- Geometry w/ CalcChat/CalcView Premium (Geometry)
- Algebra 2 w/ CalcChat/CalcView Premium (Algebra 2)
- PreCalculus w/ Limits w/ Webassign (PreCalculus)

AP

- Calculus for AP bundle w/ Webassign (AP Calculus)
- Understandable Statistics (AP Statistics)

Science

AP

- Biology AP edition bundle (AP Biology)
- Chemistry 2023 AP edition (AP Chemistry)

Social Studies

AP

- American Democracy Now AP (AP Government)
- The Cultural Landscape: Introduction to Human Geography (AP Human Geog)
- Understanding Psychology AP (AP Psychology)
- By the People: A History of the United States (AP US History)

WEIGHTED COURSES

Advance Placement

AP Biology
AP Calculus AB
AP English Language & Composition
AP Human Geography
AP Psychology
AP Statistics
AP U.S. Government
AP U.S. History
AP Seminar

High School Honors

Algebra I (8th grade)
Algebra II
Algebra and Trigonometry
Chemistry II
English 9
English 10
Geometry
Statistics
World History

Middle School Honors

Language Arts 6, 7, 8
Honors Math 6
Pre-algebra 7

Unweighted Courses		Weighted Courses	
A	4.00	A	5.00
A-	3.67	A-	4.67
B+	3.33	B+	4.33
B	3.00	B	4.00
B-	2.67	B-	3.67
C+	2.33	C+	3.33
C	2.00	C	3.00
C-	1.67	C-	2.67
D+	1.33	D+	2.33
D	1.00	D	2.00
D-	0.67	D-	1.67
F	0.00	F	0.00

NO HONORS SCIENCE or SOCIAL STUDIES

Noteworthy Points

Griffith Public School currently offers more than 20 AP and Honors courses in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, in addition to 10 Dual Credit Courses.

Students who pass an AP exam with a score of 3 or better

- Allows students to perform better in their chosen discipline
- Shows admissions offers that you are ready for college-level work
- Gives extra weight to AP grades when calculating GPA
- Are more likely to graduate college within four years or less.
- Provides students the opportunity to start early on college courses and save money

COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE PLAN

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL

Griffith Public Schools recognizes the unique social and emotional needs of high ability students. It is understood that many students who are identified with high ability suffer from anxiety brought on by several factors; the most common of which is a high level of perfectionism and fear of failure. We also understand that students may be classified as a twice exceptional learner. Because we have extensive training and a counseling program, we can present the students with what they need to be successful. We work with the students, to help identify how they are feeling, what they need help with, and what steps they can take to be successful in the classroom or with their peers. Also, because anxiety is such a common concern for our students, we have made a policy that a student cannot be removed from the program because of low test scores. Students understand they are so much more than one assessment, and their different way of thinking is celebrated.

Many times, the students do not relate to their age group and prefer older companions or adults; however, they are with a peer group that is supportive and like themselves. High ability students still have the same recess and lunch schedules as their grade level peers. They are also included in all school events and grade level field trips. Our program even participates in large grade level presentations, but lessons are differentiated for a high ability student. Students know that even if they are in this program, they will still be able to interact with their peers.

In addition, we have weekly SEL strategies reviewed with our students and the counselors regularly check in with our students to make sure they are adjusting within the program. Our teachers receive support from our Student Support Advisor, a licensed therapist, to implement SEL best practices within the learning environment.

Common social emotional issues that impact high ability students includes:

Competitiveness

- High ability children are frequently accustomed to doing well and may need guidance in developing healthy attitudes toward competition with others.

Dealing with stress

- High ability students may feel stress from perceived expectations and demands from others and self.

COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE PLAN

Overexcitabilities

Gifted students may have “intensities” that could manifest themselves in one or more of these areas (Dabrowski’s Theory):

- Intellectual intentness and focus on a particular topic
- Greater sensitivity to environment (appreciation for music or art, sensitivity to loud noises or bright lights, more allergies, etc.)
- Surplus of physical energy
- Vivid imagination and creativity
- Heightened emotional sensitivity (reaction to criticism, perfectionism empathy, attachment)

Peer Pressure

- High ability children may struggle more with peer pressure; they are already feeling different from their peers as a result of their ability differences, yet still want to fit in socially.

Perfectionism

- High ability students may place unrealistically high standards for performance on themselves. This may result in anxiety, frustration, or self-blame for less than-perfect performance.
- High Ability students may feel as though others (parents or teachers) have unrealistically high expectations. This may result in fear of failure, avoidance of challenges, depression, and connection of self-worth to performance.
- High ability students may develop unrealistically high standards for the performance of others.

Self-Esteem/Identity Issues

- High ability students may experience difficulty constructing their identities, which may lead to lowered self-esteems. Difficulty with identity development may result from any of the following:
- Lack of understanding of higher abilities and their implications → Feeling different from one’s same-age peers
- Behaviors inconsistent with gender role expectations (e.g., sensitivity in gifted boys, assertiveness in gifted girls)
- Being identified as learning disabled as well as having high abilities
- Differences resulting from cultural, linguistic, or SES differences

Social Skills

- Because of advanced vocabulary, increased intensity, and/or different interests, high ability children may experience difficulty interacting socially with the same-age peers

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Study Habits

- High ability students often lack good study skills, as they frequently can earn solid grades without effort. In later grades, when faced with challenging coursework for the first time, high ability students lacking study skills may avoid the challenge, fail, or experience undue stress and self-doubt from lack of preparation.

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

Our counselors do a superior job differentiating college and career guidance for our high ability students. Counselors will continue to offer career interest surveys, career exploration, and local community members to be guest speakers.

College and Career Readiness at the MS / HS levels provides opportunities and activities for helping high ability (as well as all students) to identify their interests in several ways:

- Taking Interest Inventories and learning about the careers that people with the same interests have.
- Provide Discovery Meetings which include community partners speaking with our students about their career choices, how they got there, how much education they needed, likes, dislikes, etc.
- Introducing students to the rigor and challenge of college by offering AP, Honors, and College level courses.

Additionally, students are provided with opportunities to visit college campuses and speak with students and professors about academic majors, transferring college credit, campus life and more. For students interested in on the job training, we make several visits to local union apprenticeship programs which provide them with hands on experiences in several areas of building trades. For students interested in joining the military, we have each branch of the military provide information on what it takes to join and to be an active member. A college and career fair is introduced to all MS/HS students. Questions are provided to students so that they can get a feeling of what to ask a college admission counselor or someone working in a field of their interest.

The HS Work Based Learning Class allows students early dismissal to participate in an internship overseen by the WBL instructor. Some internships are paid, some are unpaid.

COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE PLAN

Students are also allowed a job shadow day. By doing so, they are required to choose a career of interest and shadow this employee throughout his day. This offers the student an opportunity to learn if this may be something he/she would like to pursue in the future.

Teaching students the importance of taking standardized tests, creating resumes, and completing college and scholarship applications is one of the focuses of the high school counselor.

Ideally, K-12 counselors and teachers work together to instill college and career readiness at each grade level by promoting the importance of preparation and by providing opportunities to learn about various aspects of both college and careers.

NOTEWORTHY POINTS

High ability individuals display a complex blend of cognitive and emotional traits that allow them to excel in various areas. These traits make them capable of solving complex problems, navigating social dynamics with ease, and constantly striving for personal growth and excellence. However, some of these traits, such as perfectionism or sensitivity to stimuli, can also present challenges, requiring self-awareness and balance.



EXITING PROCEDURES

The academic, behavioral, and social emotional status of students are monitored by teachers, building principals, and counselors. Following the fall and spring NWEA assessment, benchmarks, and grading periods the high ability team meets to gather and review data.

In the event that a request is made for a student to return to general education classes and opt out of continuing in the High Ability program, please consult the following guidelines:

1. If a teacher, student, or parent communicates that the child is having difficulty adapting to the learning environment or is unable to keep pace with his/her peers, the participants may agree on a probationary period not less than one quarter to implement interventions.
2. At the end of the probationary period, the high ability coordinator will schedule a meeting to discuss student progress and placement. Meeting participants will include the student, parent(s), principal, teacher, and the District High Ability Coordinator.
3. If student and parent pursue leaving the High Ability program, the following steps are mandatory prior to transitioning the student out of the Extended Learning program:
 - a. School principal contacts the High Ability Coordinator to begin discussions about moving the student from High Ability program back to general education classes. Please note: Each withdrawal situation will be carefully assessed by the principals and teachers to select the best learning environment for the child.
 - b. Students leaving the program will transition either at the end of a 9-week grading period or semester.
 - c. A mandatory exit interview for determining the transition timeline and receiving teacher will be scheduled prior to the student leaving the program. Attendees should include the student, parent(s), principal, teachers, and the District High Ability Coordinator.
 - d. The High Ability Coordinator will remove student from the high ability database.
4. If a teacher or building principal recommends that a student leaves the High Ability program, an action plan must be put into place prior to a student transitioning from the program. If the student continues to exhibit a lack of achievement or display negative classroom behaviors at the end of the probationary period that indicate he/she is under stress and still having trouble adapting to the learning environment, the student will be removed from the program. Please note: If a parent agrees in writing to waive his/her child's right to an action plan, he/she will transition either at the end of a 9-week grading period or semester.

Griffith Public School reserves the right to place a student on a probationary period once during their first through fifth grade experience. If a student demonstrates a continued lack of achievement and classroom performance at a later date, the student will automatically be removed from the program at that end of the grading period. An additional probationary period is not applicable.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Griffith Public Schools strive to constantly find the best and most up to date training for our teachers and find time to share and discuss amongst our team. Our high ability teachers meet weekly within their buildings and monthly across the district to discuss and plan across grade levels. These plans and strategies are discussed with the administration. The administration meets with them regularly as well to answer those questions.

Administration has also had a PD session regarding the state expectations of what is high ability, who qualifies, and how we differentiate, which is why the curriculum is undergoing some changes. The high ability coordinator and four teachers will be enrolled in a High Ability Licensure Program in the Fall of 2024. Our high ability teachers also attend other PD options like the Ball State High Ability Boot Camp and SMEKENS for small group instruction.

Our Student Advisor, who is a licensed therapist, has conducted several PDs with regards to social emotional learning expectations, and we have a testing coordinator that provides PDs regarding testing and what the tests mean. Our teachers have also received STEM training from Valparaiso University to help learn how to incorporate STEM into their lessons daily; this fits with the Robotics Kits teachers currently use. Finally, teachers are also looking forward to learning more about Computer Science with training offered through NexTech. It is a goal to become more invested in the Indiana Association for the Gifted (IAG) and National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC).

9

Licensed High Ability Educators

4

Certified Dual & AP Educators

9

Licensed STEM Educators

Professional Development Supports

- Professional development will be provided based on student, instructional, and curricular needs by GPS staff and outside resources.
- All teachers supporting students in high ability will be given the opportunity to receive professional development annually.

BROAD BASED PLANNING COMMITTEE

Griffith Public School has a Board-Based Planning Committee for its high ability program. The committee is composed of administration, teachers, parents, students, and community members. The committee meets during spring semester and is tasked with discussing and refining the identification parameters, program requirements, strengths and weaknesses of the program, probation statuses, exiting the program, appeals process, and any challenges the program faces. Committee educators may also meet at the end of the year to go over our last benchmark test in case a student qualifies via one of our pathways.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ADMINISTRATION

ALANA ANDERSON
AMBRE CAIN
DEB CARVER
JON CHANCE
LEAH DUMEZICH
KATIE GARVEY
ANN MARIE JAROS
NIKI SARVER

CURRICULUM STAFF & COACHES

MARILYN BRUNK
BONNIE GRIFFEE
CINDY LEBER
MARIANA MOSCHOS
KRISTINA TAYLOR

TEACHERS

MATT ANDERSON
LAUREN ANDREE
JENNA BERAY
LISA DRISCOLL
LYNDSAY KLEFFMAN
KRISTINA KOSTIDES
JULIE LARSON
JESSICA LICHTENFELD
DANA LUYSTER
JAIME MATTEL
MONICA NIEVES
JIM PICKETT
JULIE PORRAS
JEFF SWISHER
CHRIS TOMCSI
JULIE TREVINO
BRITTANY VALDEZ
RACHEL WAJVODA

COUNSELING STAFF

SELENE GIRON
MICHAELA JOHNSON
JULIE MARTOCCIO
MELISSA PRIDE
ELISE SINTES
MICHELLE UDCHITZ

PARENTS

LAUREN BLOUNT
JODILYN BRODERICK
KELLY KALLAS
ANGIE LUKAS
VANESSA MALABANAN
KELLY NEGRETE
AMY SKURA
AMY TARKA
ANNA WYNESS

Committee Requirements

Broad-Based Planning:

- Review the five required plans that are to be available for public inspection (511 6 IAC 6-9.1-1).
- Review implementation of the five required plans.
- Review the results of the programs for students with high ability, including student assessment results, program effectiveness, and student achievement (IC 20 -36 - 2).
- Review of the action plan for improvement related to the five plans.
- Maintain a collaborative relationship between school staff and the committee.
- Review a three to five year strategic plan for program development.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Griffith Public Schools will review our high ability program annually to ensure that we are providing students with the best possible curriculum, instruction, and emotional support. The committee also reviews and makes revisions to our curriculum and instruction, counseling and guidance plan, program assessment and professional development plan as they relate to current best practices.

Academic achievement data and identification demographics will be reviewed to help guide any changes or modifications to the program. The finding of our annual review will be shared with the Broad-Based Planning Committee to help them develop goals for the year. Meeting regularly allows us to continually look at our program and seek avenues to improve it. Every year our needs change, and it is important to have a program that is fluid so our students can thrive.





GRIFFITH
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

High Ability Appendix



- Identification Welcome Letter
- Continuing On Letter
- Exit Procedures
- Probation Contract
- Action Plan
- Checklist for Exiting Program
- Appeal to Not Withdraw

SAMPLE NEW STUDENT IDENTIFICATION WELCOME LETTER

March 24, 2025

Re: High Ability New Student Identification

Dear Parent or Guardian of _____,

Your student completed the Cognitive Abilities Test™ (CogAT®) and/or the Northwest Evaluation Association assessment (NWEA) resulting in data to support instructional programming. Griffith Public Schools strives to provide exceptional academic experiences for all students and this data is essential to our goal. The State of Indiana also requires students to be assessed for advanced cognitive potential as part of the screening for High Ability identification and academic programming in Kindergarten, Second, Fifth, Seventh and Ninth.

Three pathways lead to High Ability identification and placement in High Ability Programming. Your student’s assessment data for High Ability identification are below and the High Ability identification pathways are on the back of this letter. Also, included with this correspondence are the CogAT® Profile Narrative and NWEA Student Profile Report

The mission of the Griffith Public Schools is to help students demonstrate academic growth and social responsibility in a supportive and intellectually challenging learning environment. ALL STUDENTS regardless of High Ability identification and/or placement in high ability courses are immersed in learning environments to support academic excellence. Information is required to determine High Ability identification, a Scale for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS) will be included in this letter and must be returned to your child’s teacher by Monday, June 2, 2025.

CogAT Age Score Percentile				
VQN Grade		VQN Age		Composite
NWEA Map Achievement Percentile				
		Math	Reading	
Fall				
Spring				
High Ability Identification				
Math		English Language Arts		
Yes	No	Yes	No	
Elementary Placement for Upcoming Year				
Self-Contained		Cluster Group		
Pull-out Math		Pull-out ELA		
Between-Class Ability		Split Grade Level		
Secondary Placement for Upcoming Year				
Honors		Accelerated Placement		

Circle One

Yes No I am in agreement with my child being placed in the High Ability program for the upcoming school year.

Yes No I will attend the High Ability Parent meeting on Monday, June 2, 2025. I acknowledge that the meeting will be held in the Beiriger Elementary School gym from 4:00–5:00 p.m. and I will enter through Door E.

Parent Signature

Date

SAMPLE CONTINUING ON LETTER

Dear [Parent's Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to inform you that your child will continue to be a part of our High Ability Program for the upcoming school year. After careful consideration and evaluation, we are confident that this program remains the best fit for your child's educational needs and will have the following placement:

CogAT Age Score Percentile		
VQN Grade	VQN Age	Composite
NWEA Map Achievement Percentile		
	Math	Reading
Fall		
Spring		
High Ability Identification		
Math		English Language Arts
Yes	No	Yes No
Elementary Placement for Upcoming Year		
Self-Contained		Cluster Group
Pull-out Math		Pull-out ELA
Between-Class Ability		Split Grade Level
Secondary Placement for Upcoming Year		
Honors		Accelerated Placement

As you know, the High Ability Program is designed to provide an enriched learning environment that challenges students who demonstrate exceptional academic abilities. Throughout this past year, your child has shown consistent growth, enthusiasm, and strong performance in areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and/or Science. This, combined with our ongoing assessments, confirms that he/she would benefit from continuing in this program.

We are excited to support your child as he/she engages in more complex and stimulating curriculum and activities. The program will offer opportunities for further exploration and deeper learning, allowing your child to continue to his/her their full potential. If you have any questions or would like to discuss your child's progress or any specific concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Our team looks forward to another successful year working with your child and supporting his/her academic journey.

Thank you for your continued partnership in your child's education.

Educationally Yours,

Ambre Cain

Ambre Cain
Beiriger Elementary Principal
Elementary High Ability Coordinator



Elementary High Ability Program Exit Procedures

In the event that a request is made for a student to return to general education classes and opt out of continuing in the High Ability program, please consult the following guidelines:

1. If a teacher, student, or parent communicates that the child is having difficulty adapting to the learning environment or is unable to keep pace with his/her peers, the participants may agree on a probationary period not less than one quarter to implement interventions.

2. At the end of the probationary period, the high ability coordinator will schedule a meeting to discuss student progress and placement. Meeting participants will include the student, parent(s), principal, teacher, and the District High Ability Coordinator.

3. If student and parent pursue leaving the High Ability program, the following steps are mandatory prior to transitioning the student out of the Extended Learning program:

- School principal contacts the High Ability Coordinator to begin discussions about moving the student from High Ability program back to general education classes. Please note: Each withdrawal situation will be carefully assessed by the principals and teachers to select the best learning environment for the child.
- Students leaving the program will transition either at the end of a 9-week grading period or semester.
- A mandatory exit interview for determining the transition timeline and receiving teacher will be scheduled prior to the student leaving the program. Attendees should include the student, parent(s), principal, teachers, and the District High Ability Coordinator.
- The High Ability Coordinator will remove student from the high ability database.

4. If a teacher or building principal recommends that a student leaves the High Ability program, an action plan must be put into place prior to a student transitioning from the program. If the student continues to exhibit a lack of achievement or display negative classroom behaviors at the end of the probationary period that indicate he/she is under stress and still having trouble adapting to the learning environment, the student will be removed from the program. Please note: If a parent agrees in writing to waive his/her child's right to an action plan, he/she will transition either at the end of a 9-week grading period or semester.

5. Student withdrawal procedures generally take 48 hours to process.

Griffith Public Schools reserves the right to remove a student from the High Ability program at any time. It should also be noted that a student may only be placed on a probationary period once during their first through fifth grade experience. If a student demonstrates a continued lack of achievement and classroom performance at a later date, the student will automatically be removed from the program at that end of the grading period. An additional probationary period is not applicable.

High Ability Probation Contract

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

After reviewing your child's current grades and test scores, it has been found that your child is not meeting expectations in the Griffith Public Schools' High Ability Program. Per our Elementary High Ability Acceptance Signature Page, your child agreed to:

- Do his/her very best on all assignments and assessments.
- Submit all assignments on or before their due date.
- Ask for help when a task is not fully understood.
- Maintain an 80% or better in all academic subjects.

As the parent, you also agreed to:

- The terms and conditions of the High Ability Program.
- Have your child punctual daily and follow all attendance expectations established by the district.
- The rigor of the program and the expectations of remaining in the program.
- Being contacted to discuss that your child may be placed on academic probation if he/she has difficulty with the rigor of the program.
- Allow the High Ability Committee to meet to determine the best academic placement of your child for the next quarter if he/she is placed on academic probation.

Should your child not show improvement, the following steps will take place:

- A High Ability Actions Plan Meeting will take place to set up a plan for improvement.
- Student will be placed on probation for the duration of one quarter.
- A formal meeting will be held to discuss progress and/or exit procedure from the High Ability Program.
- It should also be noted that a student may only be placed on a probationary period once during their first through fifth grade experience. If a student demonstrates a continued lack of achievement and classroom performance at a later date, the student will automatically be removed from the program at that end of the grading period. An additional probationary period is not applicable.

By signing below, you are acknowledging that a meeting has been held between you and a member of the High Ability team.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____

High Ability Action Plan

Student Name: _____ Referring Teacher: _____

Action Plan Date: _____ Reconvene Date: _____

Section 1 Steps Toward Success

Plan of Improvement Steps	Timeline for Completion
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

Section 2 Expectations for Student

High Ability Teacher will monitor the following:

- Student must maintain an 80% or higher in all courses (including specials) to continue in high ability placement.
- Student must demonstrate a 90th percentile on NWEA or better ranking, the same as their grade level peers in which he/she has been placed.
- Student progress will be reviewed at the 9th week after placement.
- The student must indicate that he/she is socially able to continue with the acceleration placement.

The High Ability teacher will constantly observe classroom behavior and communicate with the High Ability Coordinator, principal, and parents on a regular basis during the next quarter.

Section 3 Individuals Participating in Decision Making & Planning

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Teacher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

HA Coordinator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Checklist for Exiting the High Ability Program

Person(s) Requesting Exit:

- Teacher
- Parent/Guardian
- Principal
- Child

Reason(s) for Exit Request:

- Academic
- Learning environment is not appropriate for this child
- Both

The following procedures have been followed:

- At least two parent-teacher conferences have taken place.
- Student interviewed by High Ability Coordinator to discuss academic or other concerns.
- At least one parent, teacher, principal, and High Ability Coordinator has taken place.

Griffith Public Schools reserves the right to finalize the removal of a student from the High Ability Program. In the event that a change of placement is required, changes will only be made within the first two weeks of a quarter or at the beginning of the next academic year if the concern occurs during the fourth quarter.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Principal Signature: _____

Teacher Signature: _____

Appeal to Not Withdraw From the Elementary High Ability Program

Appeal Date: _____

An appeals process allows a committee to review further information that shows good cause for reconsidering the gathered criteria used for asking a student to withdraw from the High Ability program. After conducting additional investigations, interviews, and acquiring support documentation, the committee will communicate a decision no later than 7-10 days after the appeal date.

Student's Name _____ Grade _____ Class _____

School _____ Completed by _____

Relationship to student:

Self

Parent/Guardian

Other Adult

Why do you believe the student should remain in the program? Please express your opinion with examples of the student's work. Please respond below or attach comments to this document.

Comments:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please return this form with attached documentation to the student's school office where it will be forwarded to appropriate personnel for review.

High Ability Follow Up

Date _____

Phone conference

Meeting

List of attendees:

Outcome:

Student is reinstated.

Student separation from High Ability Program upheld.



Contact Information



Mrs. Ambre Cain, High Ability Coordinator



Phone Number
219-924-4030



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Griffith, IN 46319