DAVIDSON COUNTY SCHOOLS

AIG Parent Handbook

Academically and Intellectually Gifted • 2025–2028

CHALLENGE • GROWTH • POSSIBILITY

OUR PURPOSE: To help families understand identification, services, planning, partnerships, and support for gifted and advanced learners in Davidson County Schools.

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Your future. Our focus.

Welcome to Advanced Learning

Davidson County Schools provides a comprehensive K–12 continuum of services for identified AIG students and advanced learners. Our goal is to recognize potential, provide meaningful challenge, and help students grow academically, intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

> **A FAMILY GUIDE:** This handbook summarizes the program in parent-friendly language. The current Davidson County Schools Advanced Learning Plan, Parents'/Students' Rights documents, and district forms are the controlling sources when procedures or forms change.

Our Commitments

- Provide equitable access to identification, advanced curriculum, and talent-development opportunities.
- Use multiple sources of evidence to recognize strengths and potential.
- Match services to documented student needs through a DEP or IDEP.
- Provide enrichment, extension, acceleration, and social-emotional support.
- Partner with students, families, teachers, counselors, administrators, and the community.

What You Will Find in This Handbook

Understanding AIG	Identification, placement, DEPs, and transfers
Services by Grade Level	K–3 talent development through high-school pathways
Supporting the Whole Child	Acceleration, social-emotional needs, and family partnership
Getting Help	Questions, concerns, resources, and specialist assignments

Understanding AIG Identification

AIG stands for Academically and Intellectually Gifted. Students may be identified in reading, mathematics, both academic areas, or intellectual ability, based on current district criteria and documented need for services beyond the regular program.

How the Process Works

Screening and observation: The district and schools review available data and student performance for signs of advanced learning needs.
Referral: A parent/guardian, teacher, student, or other school professional may refer a student for review using the current district referral process.
Data collection: The school gathers multiple measures, which may include aptitude, achievement, classroom performance, work samples, teacher observation, performance tasks, and contextual information.
Team review: The school Gifted Education Team (GET) reviews the evidence using current district placement criteria.
Family communication and placement: Families receive information about the decision, rights, and the services documented in the student's DEP or IDEP.

Universal Screening and Equitable Access

Davidson County Schools conducts universal aptitude screening near the end of second grade using a developmentally appropriate, pictorial assessment. The district also uses local norms, talent-development opportunities, watch-and-wait processes, and accessible evidence to recognize potential in students whose strengths may not yet be reflected in traditional data.

- First- and second-year multilingual learners may be considered using nonverbal aptitude and other accessible evidence.
- Consider cultural, economic, language, disability, and opportunity-to-learn factors when reviewing the complete student profile.
- Participation in talent development or a referral does not guarantee formal identification.

Services in Elementary School

K–3 Talent Development

Talent development helps teachers recognize and cultivate potential before formal AIG identification. AIG specialists, administrators, and classroom teachers may provide whole-group experiences followed by flexible small groups based on student response and need.

- Primary Education Thinking Skills (PETS)
- Building Thinking Skills and other critical and creative thinking resources
- RIME-block enrichment and flexible-group opportunities

Grades 4–5: Hybrid Service Model

Identified students receive a combination of service options based on student need, school structure, and specialist availability. Services are designed to add depth and challenge—not simply more work.

Service option	What it may look like
Pull-out	Focused enrichment, extension, acceleration, and interaction with intellectual peers outside the core classroom.
Push-in	Targeted advanced instruction and flexible grouping within the classroom.
Co-teaching	Shared planning and delivery by the classroom teacher and AIG specialist.
Consultation	Specialist support with planning, resources, compacting, assessment, and DEP goals.

PARENT NOTE: Students should not be required to complete every routine assignment missed during AIG services. AIG work should not create a double workload.

Services in Middle and High School

Grades 6–8

- AIG students are clustered in ELA and mathematics according to their area of identification.
- Advanced ELA and compacted mathematics pathways provide increased pace, depth, complexity, inquiry, and authentic application.
- Compacted mathematics supports appropriately prepared students in reaching Math 1 by grade 8.
- Specialists collaborate with teachers, counselors, and administrators and support DEPs, referrals, transfers, student advocacy, transitions, competitions, and family communication.
- Level 5 students may also be grouped for advanced instruction when data show a need.

Grades 9–12

High-school services are provided primarily through rigorous course pathways and individualized planning rather than beginning-of-year clustering.

Opportunity	How it supports advanced learners
Honors courses	Advanced depth, complexity, independence, application, and product expectations.
Advanced Placement	College-level coursework supported by College Board course expectations and AP Classroom.
Credit by Demonstrated Mastery	An opportunity to demonstrate deep mastery and earn course credit without traditional seat time.
College and Career Promise	Dual-enrollment pathways that may allow students to earn college credit while in high school.
Other options	Early college, Governor's School, subject acceleration, whole-grade acceleration, NC Virtual options, and individualized pathways when appropriate.

ADVANCED-COURSE ACCESS: Students demonstrating Level 5 performance in mathematics or ELA must be offered an appropriate advanced course, such as Honors or AP, when available and aligned to the student's pathway.

DEPs, IDEPs, Student Review, and Transfers

Differentiated Education Plan (DEP)

Every identified AIG student has a DEP that documents the student's identification area, service options, instructional strategies, goals, and responsible personnel. The DEP is developed collaboratively and reviewed at least annually.

Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP)

An IDEP may be used when a student needs individualized services or acceleration beyond the standard service options. It documents the need, services, progress monitoring, and review dates.

The Annual Review

- Review identification, placement, schedule, achievement, growth, and current learning needs.
- Include the student, family, teachers, counselor, specialist, and administrator as appropriate.
- Document services, goals, and differentiation strategies.
- Monitor progress using multiple sources of evidence.
- Revise the plan when the student's needs or service conditions change.

Transfer Students

Davidson County Schools honors a transferring student's gifted identification while the AIG specialist reviews records, confirms the student's area of identification, determines appropriate local services, and completes required documentation. Families should provide available identification records and prior DEPs when enrolling.

CONTINUITY OF IDENTIFICATION: Davidson County Schools does not remove an established AIG identification unless a parent formally requests removal.

Acceleration and Social-Emotional Support

Acceleration Options

Acceleration is considered when evidence shows that a student needs a faster pace, more advanced content, or placement beyond the typical grade-level program. Decisions are individualized and collaborative.

- Curriculum compacting and flexible pacing
- Subject acceleration or cross-grade placement
- Compacted middle-school mathematics
- Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM)
- Whole-grade acceleration through the district protocol
- Advanced, Honors, AP, dual-enrollment, and early-college pathways

Supporting the Whole Gifted Child

Common need	Examples of support
Perfectionism	Healthy risk-taking, realistic standards, reflection, and productive responses to mistakes.
Social anxiety	Belonging, peer connection, coping strategies, and access to counseling support.
Motivation	Meaningful choice, goal setting, relevance, autonomy, and appropriate challenge.
Resilience	Persistence, feedback, flexible thinking, and recovery after setbacks.
Self-advocacy	Understanding learning needs, communicating needs, and requesting appropriate challenge.

AIG specialists, counselors, teachers, and families share responsibility for recognizing strengths and concerns. Character Strong provides the districtwide K–12 foundation, with AIG-specific support delivered through elementary services and approved secondary platforms or counseling structures.

Families as Partners

Families bring valuable knowledge about a child's interests, strengths, learning history, and needs. Regular communication helps the school and family make better decisions together.

Ways Families Can Support

- Attend DEP/IDEP meetings and ask how services match the child's identification area and needs.
- Share information about interests, strengths, challenges, and changes that may affect learning.
- Encourage healthy challenge, curiosity, productive struggle, and recovery from mistakes.
- Help the child set goals and practice respectful self-advocacy.
- Monitor workload and well-being; communicate when challenge becomes either insufficient or overwhelming.
- Participate in parent information opportunities, surveys, newsletters, and GPAC when available.

Gifted Education Team (GET)

Each school maintains a GET that includes administration, the AIG specialist, teachers, counselors, and other stakeholders as appropriate. The team supports implementation, reviews referrals and placement concerns, assists with DEPs and family engagement, and helps monitor the school's AIG services.

Gifted Program Advisory Council (GPAC)

GPAC includes district and school administrators, teachers, AIG specialists, parents, high-school students, a counselor, a Board member, and district personnel. The council reviews program information, represents stakeholder perspectives, advises on the Advanced Learning Plan, and recommends improvements.

START THE CONVERSATION: For questions about a child's services, begin with the school AIG specialist and classroom teacher. The principal, counselor, and district AIG coordinator may also help.

Questions, Concerns, and Frequently Asked Questions

If You Have a Concern

1. Talk with the classroom teacher and/or AIG specialist. Clearly describe the question or concern and the outcome you are seeking.
2. Request a review by the school Gifted Education Team and principal when the concern involves screening, identification, placement, or services.
3. Contact the district AIG coordinator if the concern is not resolved at the school level.
4. Follow the current Parents'/Students' Rights and disagreement procedures available on the district AIG Documents & Forms page for any formal appeal.

CURRENT PROCEDURES CONTROL: Deadlines, written-notice requirements, and appeal steps should always be verified using the current district rights documents and Advanced Learning Plan.

Quick Answers

Does a referral guarantee identification: No. A referral begins a review of multiple sources of evidence using current district criteria.

Does talent-development participation guarantee identification: No. It is designed to cultivate and observe potential.

Will every identified student receive the same service: No. Services are matched to grade level, area of identification, documented need, school structure, and the DEP or IDEP.

Is AIG supposed to be extra work: No. Advanced learning should increase depth, complexity, pace, creativity, inquiry, or acceleration—not simply the amount of work.

Can services change: Yes. The identification remains, while the service plan may be adjusted as needs, schedules, and course pathways change.

2026–2027 AIG Specialist Assignments

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Elementary Specialists

Specialist	Assigned school(s)
Jessica Callaci	Churchland, Friendship
Sara Dunn	Southwood, Tyro
Jennifer Cuzzort	Welcome, Brier Creek
Christa Halsey	Northwest, Denton
Amanda Johanson	Wallburg
Kristin Kennedy	Fair Grove, Davis-Townsend
Laura Miller	Midway, Hasty
Danyail West	Friedberg, Pilot
Annette Kruse	Reeds, Silver Valley
Sally Sturdivant	Southmont

Secondary Specialists

Specialist	Assigned school(s)
Ashley Coons	Oak Grove Middle/High, South Davidson Middle/High, North Davidson Middle/High
Tiffany Yancey	Ledford Middle/High, Central Middle/High, Brown Middle/East Davidson High, Tyro Middle/West Davidson High

Resources and Contact Information

Use these official Davidson County Schools pages for the most current information and forms.

AIG Program Webpage

Program overview, contacts, family resources, services, and announcements.

Advanced Learning Plan 2025–2028

The district's Board-approved AIG plan and governing program commitments.

AIG Documents, Rights, and Referral Forms

Current referral form, Parents'/Students' Rights documents, DEP resources, and other forms.

District Contact

PAM CUTSHAW: AIG Coordinator • pamcutshaw@davidson.k12.nc.us • 336-242-5536

Additional Gifted-Education Resources

- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction - Advanced Learning and Gifted Education
- North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented
- National Association for Gifted Children

This handbook was developed as a parent-friendly companion to the Davidson County Schools Advanced Learning Plan 2025–2028 and AIG Guidebook 2026–2027. It may be updated as district procedures, forms, assignments, or links change.