Shepherd Public Schools

WE

ARE

SHEPHERD

Shepherd Public Schools
Gifted and Talented Education Plan

2024-2027

Shepherd Public Schools Gifted and Talented Education Plan

Strategic Alignment and Foundation

The Shepherd Public Schools Gifted and Talented Education Plan serves as a foundational pillar within the "We Are Shepherd" framework. Our district operates under the conviction that challenging high-achieving students is not an elective addition to our curriculum, but a core requirement of our commitment to personal growth and successful lifelong learning. By maintaining a community characterized by high expectations, we ensure that advanced learners are not merely passing through our system, but are actively pushed to reach their highest potential.

This plan synthesizes the District Mission with the Integrated School Action Plan (ISAP) Strategic Action Plan, which explicitly commits to "focus on our upper level students." In alignment with the ISAP's goal of continuous improvement, we recognize that true academic excellence requires a deliberate effort to move beyond minimum state standards. We foster a student-centered environment where individualized pacing and high-level proficiency are the benchmarks for success.

To ensure our advanced learners develop the skills necessary for life after graduation, we map our seven Graduate Profile attributes to specific gifted education outcomes:

Graduate Profile Attribute	Gifted Education Outcome
Critical Thinking	Challenging assumptions and reasoning effectively to make logical judgments based on complex evidence.
Problem-Solving	Extracting learning from failure to generate original, imaginative solutions to real-world scenarios.
Self-Management/Responsibility	Creating, monitoring, and reflecting upon ambitious personal growth goals and realistic self-efficacy.

Timeliness/Dependability	Reliably meeting high-level commitments and managing complex project timelines.
Conflict Communication	Effectively articulating advanced thoughts and ideas through oral, written, and nonverbal modes.
Enthusiasm	Seizing opportunities to explore and lead by combining hard work with purpose-driven curiosity.
Community-Mindedness	Embracing diverse cultures and unique perspectives, including a deep synthesis of IEFA content.

This high-level vision is supported by rigorous, data-driven methods used to identify students who require these advanced academic challenges.

Multi-Criteria Identification and Student Profiling

Shepherd Public Schools employs a strategic multi-criteria approach to identify gifted and talented learners. Moving beyond a single test score ensures a more equitable and comprehensive identification of talent across the K-12 spectrum. This holistic view allows us to recognize diverse student profiles—ensuring that students who excel in specific domains like science or mathematics are identified even if their profiles differ in other areas.

Student identification begins with the analysis of NWEA MAP Percentile Bands, administered in Fall, Winter, and Spring:

- Gifted Extension: Students performing at or above the 80th percentile in Reading, Math, Language, or Science.
- Talent Development Pool: Students performing within the 61st to 80th percentile in Reading, Math, Language, or Science, identifying those with the potential to move into high-achievement tiers through targeted enrichment.

To maintain a standard of excellence, we align our identification with "Advanced" benchmarks. These figures represent the current "Advanced" ceiling that the district aims to maintain or expand through 2027:

- Elementary Performance Targets: Maintaining or exceeding advanced rates of 20.74% in Math, 21.81% in ELA, and 14.29% in Science (SBAC).
- High School Performance Targets: Maintaining or exceeding ACT/Pre-ACT Advanced scores of 15.00% for ELA and 11.29% for Math.

Beyond standardized scores, we incorporate a Qualitative and Diagnostic Layer to build a complete student profile. This includes STAR Reading data, AIMSweb diagnostics (R-CBM fluency, M-COMP computational skills, and M-CAP concepts and applications), teacher referrals, and student self-advocacy. These identified profiles dictate the specific level of intervention and enrichment provided in our tiered service model.

Tiered Service Delivery and Differentiated Instruction

The strategic importance of our Tiered Service Delivery model lies in its ability to remove the "ceiling" from student growth. Differentiation must occur at every level—from universal classroom settings to specialized secondary pathways—to ensure that high-ability learners are continuously challenged and never restricted by a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Tier 1 (Universal Classroom Extension)

At the universal level, Shepherd utilizes a "Standards-Plus" instruction model. We recognize that Montana state standards are the minimum requirement; therefore, our teachers are trained through the Alliance for Curriculum Enhancement (ACE) framework to push instruction to even higher levels. By utilizing ACE 4.0 rubrics and "bundling" standards, teachers move away from standardized pacing to provide individualized pacing, allowing advanced students to master content and apply knowledge in imaginative, non-linear ways.

Tier 2 (Targeted Enrichment Blocks)

For students identified for talent development or gifted extension, specific enrichment interventions are scheduled into the school day:

School Level	Enrichment Intervention Model
Elementary	30-minute daily blocks utilizing Edgenuity for specialized extension and AIMSweb-driven group work.
Middle School	45-minute WIN (What I Need) blocks held every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday for targeted academic growth.
High School	Accelerated study hall opportunities and EdReady math preparation for advanced placement and college readiness.

Tier 3 (Secondary Acceleration & CTE)

High-intensity pathways provide vocational and academic acceleration for students ready for post-secondary challenges. Our partnership with MSU-Billings/City College allows for Dual Enrollment in courses such as Advanced Computers and Welding. Furthermore, with 36% of our students engaged as CTE Concentrators, we provide a pathway for academic rigor where high-ability learners apply theoretical knowledge to real-world technical problems. Advanced students also engage in independent courses through MTDA or college-level dual enrollment, ensuring that critical thinking skills are integrated into their final years of study.

Professional Learning and Mentor Support

The success of our Gifted and Talented Education Plan relies heavily on teacher capacity. We ensure a high-expectations environment by investing in professional development that focuses on data analysis and specialized coaching.

Our Weekly PLC Release Time protocol serves as the engine for this growth. During these sessions, subject-area departments analyze high-achiever data from MAP and AIMSweb to construct advanced extension rubrics. This collaborative time allows teachers to share best practices for instruction that moves beyond basic proficiency into mastery.

The New Teacher Mentor Program further supports this mission by pairing new educators with experienced colleagues. These mentors are specifically tasked with

helping new teachers navigate the complexities of advanced differentiation and individualized pacing within the ACE framework. Furthermore, annual attendance at PLC conferences (Goal 1 of our Professional Development Plan) allows our staff to stay updated on the latest teaching methods and educational research specifically targeted at high-achieving populations. This professional expertise is the prerequisite for the transparent and accurate communication of student progress to our families.

Family Engagement, Evaluation, and Program Accountability

Transparency is a cornerstone of our advanced academics program. Involving families directly in the data-tracking process promotes the "accountability from everyone" envisioned in our district mission.

We utilize a Student-Led Parent Conference model to ensure students take ownership of their advanced learning journey.

"The student-led conference process empowers the student to direct and report on his/her progress. Participation rates are exceptional, reaching 95% in the Middle School and 85% in the High School. During these sessions, student growth charts and MAP profiles are used to articulate goals and demonstrate high-level achievement."

To maintain program accountability, we utilize several feedback and evaluation mechanisms:

- Infinite Campus Access: Real-time tracking of standards-based proficiency and academic performance.
- Milligan School Data Surveys: Annual feedback from parents, students, and staff used to evaluate school climate and, specifically, the level of academic rigor present in the classroom.
- IEFA Integration Accountability: Staff utilizes a shared documentation platform to update IEFA-integrated lessons, ensuring that cultural synthesis projects are tracked and maintained across the district.
- ISAP Review Cycles: Continuous assessment of our Integrated School Action Plan to ensure resources are effectively allocated to support our "upper level students."

Through these combined efforts, Shepherd Public Schools reaffirms its commitment to empowering every high-ability learner to achieve greatness and develop the skills necessary for lifelong success through 2027.