

Southwestern Consolidated School District

High Ability Program

Mission Statement

The mission of Southwestern Consolidated School District is to promote student excellence by ensuring a challenging curriculum for high ability students with appropriate educational experiences commensurate with their academic ability and/or achievement in language arts and math. The school corporation recognizes the need to identify these students through systematic, on-going procedures in order to develop the gifts, talents, motivation, or interests of these students.

Definition

High Ability Student is one who performs 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, motivation, or interests. (The Indiana Code)

Program Goals

Goal 1 – High Ability students in grades K-12 will be identified regardless of gender, race, age, or socio-economic background.

Objectives:

- a. To have an identification committee to determine high ability students and to share identification procedures with teachers and parents.
- b. To use subgroup norms to find high ability students in all racial and social-economic subgroups.
- c. To make early identification of high ability students a priority by screening all Kindergarten students before they begin in the fall and test all kindergarten students in the spring.
- d. To evaluate the identification protocol and the high ability program as a whole on a regular basis.

Goal 2 – All staff and stakeholders will be trained in the academic, social, and emotional needs of High Ability students.

Objectives:

- a. To train all instructional, guidance, and support staff to appropriately work with High Ability students.
- b. To provide on-going professional development to promote appropriate differentiated instruction in the core subject areas.
- c. To encourage teachers to take High Ability classes and to consider earning a High Ability License.
- d. To encourage additional high ability professional development such as attending conferences on high ability education.

Goal 3 – To provide challenging, differentiated curriculum and instruction commensurate with the ability and achievement levels of identified high ability students.

Objectives:

- a. To implement best practices for differentiated teaching and learning specific to the needs of high ability learners (such as using tiered lessons, ability grouping, flexible grouping, and acceleration).
- b. To adapt, modify, or replace the regular classroom curriculum with more in-depth and accelerated content to maximize potential and meet the advanced learning needs of high ability students.
- c. To document with evidence all high ability learners having their individual learning needs met successfully in areas of identification and service.
- d. To continue to explore the best practices and best strategies, such as enrichment or acceleration, for high ability students.

Program Description

At the kindergarten level, students are pre-assessed in the spring before entering kindergarten by the Title I staff. They are assessed for levels of social interaction, name recognition, left to right progression, letter identification, color naming, number knowledge, number use, number naming, name printing, and following oral directions. This allows classroom rosters for the fall of the kindergarten year to be developed according to student achievement in language arts and math. In the fall, students are re-assessed using mClass to determine language arts and math instructional groups. Students who are achieving in language arts and math beyond grade level may be placed in a high ability group within the classroom, in an accelerated classroom (for example, a first grade classroom), or may even be considered for grade skipping, as appropriate. Students who have been identified in this way for advanced instruction will be among those assessed for identification as high ability learners in language arts and/or math. All kindergarten students will be screened for high general intellectual or specific academic ability by the end of the school year.

NOTE: Students may be tested, at the request of their parents, for early entrance into kindergarten.

In grades K-6, students who have been identified as having high ability in the general intellectual domain and/or in language arts and math will be placed in a cluster group in one classroom with a teacher who has or is seeking licensure in gifted education when possible. Instruction will be differentiated for those students either in the cluster classroom, in an accelerated classroom (for example, a student would go to the next grade level for instruction), or may even be considered for grade skipping, if appropriate.

In grades 7-8, students identified as high ability in language arts will be placed in an honors class for instruction in that subject. Likewise, 7th grade high ability math students will be placed in an honors math class to prepare them for acceleration into 8th grade Algebra I.

In grades 9-12, students who are identified as having high ability are encouraged to take honors and Advanced Placement courses when possible. High ability students will be encouraged to pursue advanced science classes including AP Biology, AP Chemistry, physics; advanced social studies classes including AP Human Geography and AP World History; AP English; AP Calculus. Students may be admitted to those classes by adequately meeting the requirements of the pre-requisite courses.

Honors Diplomas are also offered for students who meet the necessary requirements.

Screening and Identification Process

Kindergarten

- All students are given identification measures
 - Norm-Referenced Measure of Achievement: Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)
 - Norm-referenced Measures of Ability: CogAT
 - Qualitative Measure: Kingore, mClass scores, behavioral/indicator checklists

Third Grade

- All students are given identification measures
 - Norm-Referenced Measure of Achievement: ITBS
 - Norm-referenced Measures of Ability: CogAT
 - Qualitative Measure: Teacher, Parent, or Self Nomination, work portfolio, behavioral/indicator checklists

Sixth Grade

- Screening
 - Measure of Achievement: Pass Plus score on ILEARN
 - Qualitative Measure: Teacher, Parent, and Self-Nomination, work portfolio, behavioral/indicator checklists
- Identification
 - Norm-Referenced Measure of Achievement: ITBS
 - Norm-referenced Measures of Ability: CogAT
 - Qualitative Measure: Teacher, Parent, and Self-Nomination, work portfolio, behavioral/indicator checklists

Eighth Grade

- Screening
 - Measure of Achievement: Pass Plus score on ILEARN
 - Qualitative Measure: Teacher, Parent, and Self-Nomination, work portfolio, behavioral/indicator checklists
- Identification

- Norm-Referenced Measure of Achievement: Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)
- Norm-referenced Measures of Ability: CogAT
- Qualitative Measure: Teacher, Parent, and Self-Nomination, work portfolio, behavioral/indicator checklists

Selection Procedures

- All decisions regarding selection and placement for high ability services will be made by a committee including the high ability coordinator, building principal(s), teachers with training in high ability education, and other related personnel.
- After reviewing student scores and qualitative descriptors on the identification measures, this committee will identify approximately 5-10% of the total student population who will need high ability services in language arts, and 5-10% who will need services in math. Percentage is likely to vary from year to year.
- Committee will consider the standard error of measurement associated with each norm-referenced instrument and avoid selection based on strict cut-off scores.

Timeline

Fall Semester:

- Establish Identification Committee
- Plan testing schedule and order tests
- Review program, policy, and procedures
- Collect screening measure data from previous spring (ILEARN)

Spring Semester:

- Collect identification measure data (ITBS)
- Administer identification instruments for kindergarten, 3rd, 6th, & 8th graders
- Disseminate all assessment information to the Identification Committee
- Identification Committee evaluates data to determine identification of qualifying High Ability students
- Notify parents of qualifying High Ability students
- Pre-assess incoming kindergarten students
- Determine placement for students for fall

Petitioning/Appeals Procedures

A student, parent, teacher, or administrator may request reconsideration of a student to be placed in the High Ability Program by following the procedure below:

1. The student, parent, teacher, or administrator must submit an Appeal Form to the High Ability Coordinator. The appeal request must be accompanied by samples of student class work that demonstrates the student's aptitude in the academic area(s) being evaluated. Students or parents requesting an appeal may provide testing from an outside source, but would be responsible for any costs incurred.

2. The coordinator will review the student profile and may request alternative assessments at no charge to the parent. Which assessments may include but are not limited to:
 - InView as alternative to CogAT; SAGES 2
 - ILEARN scores
 - Additional classroom work samples
 - Behavioral/Indicator Checklists
3. Building level identification team will reconvene to review new data. This meeting may include an interview with the student and/or petitioners.
4. Identification team will evaluate data and make a thoughtful decision on a case-by-case, individual basis that is in the best interest of the student. The team will provide a written recommendation report to the High Ability Coordinator.
5. The High Ability Coordinator will contact the student and/or petitioner and provide results.

Exit Procedures

If a student, parent, or teachers believes a high ability placement for services is no longer appropriate, he or she may:

1. Complete the High Ability Student Exit Form
2. Arrange a conference with the parties involved, including the parent and the teacher providing services. This conference may be a telephone conference.
3. Parent, student, and teacher examine issues of concern and discuss interventions that may be implemented.
4. Participants agree on a probationary period of preferably not less than one grading period to implement interventions.
5. At the end of the probationary period, the parent, student, and teacher meet to review progress and determine whether or not the student should exit services.
6. If an exit is deemed appropriate, the parent signs permission to “de-flag” student for high ability placement and services.
7. Parent permission for exit and documentation of meetings/interventions are kept by the High Ability Coordinator.
8. High Ability Coordinator removes high ability flag for student database.