North Carolina Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program Standards – DRAFT

As Approved by the State Board of Education on XXXXXXXX

Historical Overview of Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) in NC

North Carolina has had legislation governing gifted education since 1961, exemplifying the state's strong commitment to gifted education for nearly fifty years. In 1974, legislation identified gifted and handicapped children as children with special needs. In 1977, Chapter 927 in the NC Session Laws brought into compliance a system of educational opportunities for all children requiring special education. In 1983, Chapter 247 in the NC Session Laws revised the program title to "Academically Gifted" to emphasize North Carolina's commitment to academic programs and legislated that a student's gifted education program may be described with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a Group Education Plan (GEP). In 1993, Chapter 321, Section 134(c) in NC Session Laws, required that the State Board of Education "reexamine the State's laws, rules, and policies concerning the education of academically gifted children." As a result, new legislation for gifted education was passed in 1996, resulting in *Article 9B, Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students* [N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5-.8 (Article 9B)]. Article 9B provides a state definition for Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) students and requires local education agencies (LEA) to develop three-year AIG local plans with specific components, to be approved by local school boards and subsequently sent to the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for review and comment. Article 9B is the current legislation mandating identification and services for gifted education K-12.

State Definition of AIG Students, Article 9B (N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.5)

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

Rationale for the AIG Program Standards

"The General Assembly believes that public schools should challenge all students to aim for academic excellence" (Article 9B). The State Board of Education's (SBE) mission is that "every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st century" (adopted August 2006). Therefore, quality and comprehensive AIG programs are essential in supporting these goals and the needs of gifted learners across North Carolina.

In January 2008, the North Carolina AIG program, under the auspices of the Exceptional Children Division of DPI, received a performance audit through the Office of the State Auditor. The audit was initiated in response to parent/family concerns that state allocated AIG budget funds were being used for purposes other than AIG programming, while AIG students were left underserved. The purpose of the audit was to identify weaknesses and make recommendations for the monitoring and evaluation of the AIG program in order for DPI, guided by the State Board of Education, to take appropriate corrective action. The State Auditor gathered relevant information from DPI, district personnel, and parents/ families. One of the recommendations of the audit was to develop state performance standards for local AIG programs in order to provide a statewide vehicle for monitoring program implementation, to support quality and effective local AIG programs, and to safeguard the rights of AIG students.

The structure that holds gifted programs together is nested in the policies, statutes, and guidelines that states have enacted (Brown, Avery, VanTassel-Baska, Worley & Stambaugh, 2006). Local gifted programs, and subsequently the growth of gifted learners, are heavily influenced by the strength of the initiatives emanating from the state level. Moreover, the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (PL 107.110) neither excludes nor includes gifted learners,

resulting in compromised services for AIG students in order to focus on specific mandates addressed in the federal legislation. Thus, in the absence of federal legislation, state policies and legislation are the cornerstone of gifted programming.

AIG programs in North Carolina are embedded within and responsive to the local context of an LEA and, as a result, give rise to differences among programs across the state. Therefore, the AIG Program Standards are critical in providing a statewide framework for quality programming, while still honoring local flexibility. In an effort to strengthen gifted education in North Carolina, these AIG Program Standards represent the SBE's and DPI's commitment to ensure that the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students are being met.

Foundations of the AIG Program Standards

The AIG Program Standards are based on the following principles*:

Gifted learners form a diverse group of students with a variety of academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs different than those of other children of their age, experience, and environment; therefore, they require appropriate identification and a range of service options within a comprehensive program.

Gifted learners possess the ability to think with more complexity and abstraction and learn at faster rates; therefore, they require challenging, differentiated curriculum and instruction which are developmentally appropriate and will prepare them for the 21st century.

Gifted learners have different learning needs; therefore, they require time with others who are similar to themselves in order to establish cognitive relationships and to facilitate their academic, intellectual, social, and emotional growth.

Gifted learners have unique social and emotional needs; therefore, they require access to appropriate support systems and counseling to assure their affective well-being.

Gifted learners have needs different than others of their age, experience or environment; therefore, they require teachers and other personnel involved in their education who have the necessary knowledge, skills, and understandings to meet those needs.

Gifted learners, including those children with limited educational opportunities, are shaped by their early education experiences which form future learning habits; therefore, they need access to an appropriately challenging and engaging education early in their schooling to ensure that their potential is developed and optimized.

Gifted learners from under-represented populations are often overlooked in gifted programming; therefore, they require purposeful and intentional support to ensure that their potential is recognized, developed, and served. Gifted learners who are often left underserved include students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

When an appropriately differentiated education is not provided, gifted learners do not thrive in school, their potential is diminished, and they may even suffer from cognitive and affective harm; therefore, gifted learners must have their needs addressed in order to become capable, valuable, effective, and successful contributors to our global society.

Providing equity and excellence for all students in North Carolina is a priority; therefore, it is critical to meet the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners in an overall educational program.

* Adapted with permission of the authors. Coleman, M. R. & Gallagher, J. J. (1995). Appropriate Differentiated Services: Guides for best practices in the education of gifted children. Gifted Child Today, *18(5), 32-33.*

Purposes of the AIG Program Standards

Programs for the gifted differ in response to local needs and resources, but successful program design takes into account a common set of components. According to Reis (2006), a cohesive, thoughtful, and comprehensive gifted program design serves three major functions. First, it communicates which students' needs will be met and how. Second, it communicates a plan for implementation and coordination among the design components. Third, it provides a framework for decision-making and continuous program improvement.

The North Carolina AIG Program Standards have been developed to serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate, and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs. These standards reflect Article 9B and nationally-accepted best practices in gifted education. Furthermore, the AIG Program Standards help ensure that the needs of AIG students are met and the potential of AIG students is optimally developed.

These AIG Program Standards will:
- convey expectations for quality local AIG programs and services;
- guide the development, revision, and monitoring of local AIG programs;
- articulate best practices for local AIG programs, including those related to student identification, differentiated curriculum and instruction, and comprehensive programming;
- provide a guide for AIG personnel and professional development;
- promote strong partnerships and communication between and among home, school, and community; and
- serve as a vehicle for continuous program improvement and accountability.

Organization of the AIG Program Standards

Each standard is formatted as follows:

Standard: The standard is a defining statement articulating the expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs and relates to the categories addressed in Article 9B.

Practices: The practices clarify the standard, describe what an LEA should have in place, and guide LEAs to improve their programs. These practices will be verified to stakeholders through a variety of sources of evidence.

Standard 1: Student Identification

The LEA's student identification procedures for AIG are clear, equitable, and comprehensive and lead towards appropriate educational services.

PRACTICES

a) Articulates and disseminates clear, comprehensive, and equitable screening, referral, and identification processes for all grade levels to school personnel, parents/families, students, and the community-at-large.

b) Employs multiple criteria for student identification, including measures that reveal student aptitude, student achievement, or potential to achieve in order to develop a comprehensive profile for each student.

c) Administers both non-traditional and traditional standardized measures that are based on current theory and research.

d) Initiates screening, referral, and identification procedures that respond to traditionally under-represented populations of the gifted and are responsive to LEA demographics. These populations include students who are culturally/ ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

e) Ensures consistency in implementation of screening, referral, and identification processes within the LEA.

f) Establishes written policies that safeguard the rights of AIG students and their parents/families, including informed consent regarding identification and placement, reassessment procedures, transfers from other LEAs, and procedures for resolving disagreements.

g) Maintains documentation that explains the identification process and service options for individual AIG students, which is reviewed annually with parents/families.

Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction

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

PRACTICES

a) Adapts the NC Standard Course of Study (SCOS) according to identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles, K-12.

b) Enriches, extends, and accelerates the curriculum to address a range of ability levels in language arts, math, and other content areas as appropriate.

c) Employs diverse and effective instructional practices to address a range of learning needs.

d) Selects and uses a variety of research-based supplemental resources that augment curriculum and instruction.

e) Fosters the development of 21st century content and skills by infusing the following at an advanced level:
   - high-level content for global awareness, civic and economic literacies, and health awareness,
   - critical thinking and problem solving,
   - high-level communication and collaboration,
   - applied information and media literacy, including concepts, systems, and operations in challenging research contexts,
   - creativity and innovation,
   - real-world learning in local, regional, and global contexts, and
   - applied life skills for leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, productivity, responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility.

f) Uses on-going assessment to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction.

g) Creates affective curricular and instructional practices which support the social and emotional needs of AIG students.

h) Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students through purposeful and intentional strategies and differentiated curriculum and instruction.

i) Ensures collaboration among AIG personnel and other professional staff, including exceptional children's personnel and others related to AIG students, to develop and implement differentiated curriculum and instruction.

j) Develops and documents a plan that articulates the differentiated curriculum and instruction services that match the identified needs of the K-12 AIG students. The document is reviewed annually to ensure effective programming, a continuum of services, and school transitions.

Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development

The LEA recruits and retains highly qualified professionals and provides relevant and effective professional development concerning the needs of gifted learners that is on-going and comprehensive.

PRACTICES

a) Employs an AIG-licensed educator(s) to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program.

b) Ensures that AIG specialists are engaged in tasks which explicitly address the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

c) Establishes specific and appropriate professional development requirements for all personnel involved in AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children's personnel, counselors, and school administrators.

d) Places AIG students in classrooms with teachers who have met the LEA's professional development requirements for that position or have earned an AIG add-on license.

e) Aligns professional development with local AIG program goals and other district initiatives.

f) Aligns professional development opportunities with state and/or national teaching standards, including 21st century skills and content at advanced levels.

g) Provides opportunities for AIG specialists and other teachers to plan, implement, and refine applications of their professional development learning.

Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community

The LEA provides an array of K-12 programs and services by the total school community to meet the diverse academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

PRACTICES

a) Delivers AIG programs and services which are comprehensive of the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners across all grade levels and settings.

b) Aligns AIG programs and services with each area of AIG identification, goals of the program, and resources of the LEA.

c) Delivers AIG programs and services that are integral and connected to the total instructional program of the LEA in policy and practice.

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

e) Communicates among and between teachers and schools to ensure an effective continuation of K-12 services, especially at key transition points.

f) Ensures collaboration and involvement among regular education teachers, exceptional children's teachers, other specialists, instructional staff, parents/families, and administrators to provide differentiated programming and services.

g) Ensures that school counseling personnel, regular education teachers, AIG specialists, parents/families, and others collaborate to address the social and emotional needs of AIG students.

h) Articulates and implements a process for accelerative instructional and placement options when an appropriate body-of-evidence indicates that such a practice is warranted for an individual gifted learner.

i) Provides intentional programming for traditionally under-represented AIG populations, including culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

j) Encourages extra-curricular programs and events that enhance and further develop the needs and interests of AIG students.

Standard 5: Partnerships

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

PRACTICES

a) Partners and communicates with parents/families and the community to ensure that the most appropriate services for the academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of AIG students are provided.

b) Shares with stakeholders, including all students' parents/families, information regarding the local AIG program, the local AIG plan, and other policies relating to gifted education.

c) Involves stakeholders, reflecting the diversity of AIG parents/families and the community, in the development, implementation, and monitoring of the local AIG program and plan.

d) Informs parents/families and the community of opportunities available to AIG students on an ongoing basis and in their native language.

e) Implements initiatives to intentionally involve parents/families and the community in meaningful ways to support gifted education.

f) Forms partnerships with parents/families, institutions of higher education, local businesses and industry, and other stakeholders within the community to enhance and gain support for AIG programs and services.

Standard 6: Program Accountability

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

PRACTICES

a) Develops a written AIG plan describing the local AIG program in accordance with state legislation and policy, which has been approved by the LEA's school board and sent to SBE/DPI for review and comment.

b) Monitors the implementation of the local AIG program and plan in accordance with current legislation and state policies to ensure fidelity of implementation for all AIG program components.

c) Uses and monitors state funds allotted for the local AIG program according to state policy.

d) Maintains, analyzes, and shares student performance growth and annual drop-out data for AIG students.

e) Monitors the representation and retention of under-represented populations in the local AIG program, including students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional.

f) Maintains current data regarding the credentials of personnel serving AIG students.

g) Forms an advisory group of community members, parents/families of AIG students representative of diverse populations in the program, teachers of the gifted, and other professional staff who meet regularly to review all aspects of the local AIG program and make recommendations for program improvement.

h) Elicits regular feedback from students, parents/families, teachers, and other stakeholders regarding the quality and effectiveness of the local AIG program.

i) Reviews and revises the local AIG program and plan based on multiple sources of data for continuous program improvement.

j) Disseminates all data from evaluation of the local AIG program to the public.

k) Protects the rights of all AIG students through policies, procedures, and practices.

References

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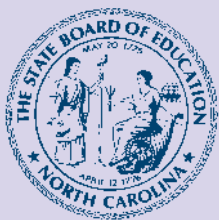
Future-Ready Students: Goals for the 21st Century

The guiding mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education is that every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st century.

NC Public Schools Will Produce Globally Competitive Students.

- Every student excels in rigorous and relevant core curriculum that reflects what students need to know and demonstrate in a global 21st Century environment, including a mastery of languages, an appreciation of the arts and competencies in the use of technology.
- Every student's achievement is measured with an assessment system that informs instruction and evaluates knowledge, skills, performance and dispositions needed in the 21st Century.
- Every student will be enrolled in a course of study designed to prepare them to stay ahead of international competition.
- Every student uses technology to access and demonstrate new knowledge and skills that will be needed as a life-long learner to be competitive in a constantly changing international environment.
- Every student has the opportunity to graduate from high school with an Associate's Degree or college transfer credit.

NC Public Schools Will Be Led By 21st Century Professionals.

- Every teacher will have the skills to deliver 21st Century content in a 21st Century context with 21st Century tools and technology that guarantees student learning.
- Every teacher and administrator will use a 21st Century assessment system to inform instruction and measure 21st Century knowledge, skills, performance and dispositions.
- Every education professional will receive preparation in the interconnectedness of the world with knowledge and skills, including language study.
- Every education professional will have 21st Century preparation and access to ongoing, high quality professional development aligned with State Board of Education priorities.
- Every educational professional uses data to inform decisions.

NC Public School Students Will Be Healthy and Responsible.

- Every learning environment will be inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive and flexible for student success.

- Every school provides an environment in which each child has positive, nurturing relationships with caring adults.
- Every school promotes a healthy, active lifestyle where students are encouraged to make responsible choices.
- Every school focuses on developing strong student character, personal responsibility and community/world involvement.
- Every school reflects a culture of learning that empowers and prepares students to be life-long learners.

Leadership Will Guide Innovation in NC Public Schools.

- School professionals will collaborate with national and international partners to discover innovative transformational strategies that will facilitate change, remove barriers for 21st Century learning and understand global connections.
- School leaders will create a culture that embraces change and promotes dynamic, continuous improvement.
- Educational professionals will make decisions in collaboration with parents, students, businesses, education institutions, and faith-based and other community and civic organizations to impact student success.
- Public school professionals will collaborate with community colleges and public and private universities and colleges to provide enhanced educational opportunities for students.

NC Public Schools Will Be Governed and Supported By 21st Century Systems.

- Processes are in place for financial planning and budgeting that focus on resource attainment and alignment with priorities to maximize student achievement.
- Twenty-first century technology and learning tools are available and are supported by school facilities that have the capacity for 21st Century learning.
- Information and fiscal accountability systems are capable of collecting relevant data and reporting strategic and operational results.
- Procedures are in place to support and sanction schools that are not meeting state standards for student achievement.

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