

Metropolitan School District of Mt. Vernon High Ability Programming

Philosophy on High Ability Education

The Metropolitan School District of Mt. Vernon recognizes that some students achieve or show the propensity to achieve at an outstanding level of accomplishment in core academic areas of language arts and/or mathematics regardless of their socio-economic, cultural, or ethnic background. The high ability program provides a supportive learning climate that will enrich learning so students can maximize academic potential and develop emotionally and socially to be positive contributing members of society.

Definition of the High Ability Student

The High Ability Specific Domain 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.

A High Ability General Intellectual student demonstrates potential for performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment when compared to peers of the same age, experience, or environment.

Characteristics of High Ability/Gifted Students

When compared to others of the same age or demographic group high ability students may exhibit the following characteristics:

- Learns new things quickly
- Extensive vocabulary, background knowledge in the domain of service
- Grasps concepts quickly, intuitive
- Grasps “Big Picture” and connections
- Exhibits a more intense energy level
- May be sensitive and/or introverted
- Displays an interest in complex games, fantasy, or non-fiction
- Exhibits a great sense of humor
- Demonstrates a curious nature and is observant
- Thinks differently and/or is creative
- Employs diverse methods for solving problems

Goals for the High Ability Program

The high ability student will:

- Become aware of their giftedness and will appreciate their uniqueness as gifted individuals while understanding the similarities and differences between themselves and others.

- Develop independent study skills through the use of an advanced curriculum in selected core academic areas that will challenge their unique potential.
- Employ higher level thinking skills which will motivate them to become independent, self-directed learners.
- Build an awareness of school, community, and societal responsibilities
- Perceive and formulate original solutions to problems.

Broad Based Planning Committee

A Broad Based Planning Committee (BBPC) will assist in the identification process and selection of the high ability cadre of students, as well as, participating in nomination criteria development, programming of curriculum and instruction, and in systematic program evaluation. The BBPC Committee shall consist of the program director, classroom teachers, counselors, school administrators, school board member(s), and parent(s.)

High Ability Identification Categories

Employing a combination of source data, students are identified and categorized as:

- High Ability–Math [9th Stanine or 96th Percentile – QN Composite on CogAT]
- High Ability–Language Arts [9th Stanine or 96th Percentile – V on CogAT]
- High Ability -General Intellectual (Identified High Ability in both Math and Language Arts)

Multifaceted Student Identification for High Ability

Students identified as High Ability by utilizing triangulated data yields a more holistic understanding of a student’s capability to perform. Data sources include achievement, ability, and qualitative measures. Provisions for parent and/or teacher recommendation are also provided. (See appendices for appeal forms.) Multiple sources of information are considered when nominating, screening, and identifying students.

Student Selection - Identification Timeline

Upon identification from prescribed assessment protocol and written parent consent, each student will be acknowledged as to their designation in student registration via STN (Student Test Number). Testing for High Ability is administered in Kindergarten, Second Grade, Fifth Grade and Eighth Grade. Testing in the Fifth Grade and Eighth Grade normally is only conducted on students that are new to the district or who have demonstrated a significant change in performance to warrant the testing. The testing is conducted the year prior to transition to the next grade span (K-5, 6-8, 9-12) or building level. The two assessments used for student selection are the Cognitive Abilities Test and I-Ready Math and Reading Diagnostic Tests. The CogAT is used to identify students based on ability or aptitude. Students that score between the 85th and 96th percentile on CogAT then have their I-Ready Math and Reading Diagnostic Tests scores checked. Since the I-Ready assessments are norm-referenced achievement tests, student that score in the 96th percentile are also identified.

The current CogAT test is administered online. The assessment consists of three main domains: Verbal, Quantitative and Nonverbal. The Second, Fifth and Eighth Grade students take three subtests in each domain. Kindergarten students take a screening assessment which consists of the first subtest in each domain. Kindergarten students that score at or above the 84th percentile are then administered the remaining two subtests in each domain.

Selection is then determined by the score on the CogAT test, demonstrated achievement, including the I-Ready assessments and teacher and parent recommendations. The recommended cut score for selection on the CogAT assessment is the 96th percentile nationally or the 96th percentile after local scores are compiled.

CogAT testing will typically be conducted during the first few weeks of January. I-Ready assessments are given three times throughout the school year.

Performance-based Screening (Achievement)

Students in grades 9-12 are identified by a permanent record of achievement scores, specifically high performance on the I-Ready assessments (ISTEP+, ECA, NWEA, AIMSWeb, and the Orleans Hanna Math Test may also be considered), performance on CogAT assessments and from prior testing/placement in High Ability. Teacher and/or counselor recommendations may also be employed in the initial screen for newly enrolled secondary students. Tenth Grade students will also be administered the PSAT score on a yearly basis. These scores will be used to identify students that were not selected in previous years.

Additional testing in grades K-12 will be provided for students nominated by teacher/parent appeals, for those who missed protracted amounts of instruction due to illness, and/or for students moving to our schools from a different school district.

Selection and Record Keeping

Upon recommendation for high ability status, signed parental consent must be obtained for students to be identified and served in the program. High ability status will be input into the student's permanent record via the Student Test Number (STN) database and into the Student Management System. High Ability categories include: General Intellectual (Selection to both HA Language Arts and HA Mathematics), High Ability Language Arts, and High Ability Mathematics. Once a student is identified as High Ability, they remain in the program and participate in the Second, Fifth, and Eighth Grade testing screens.

Curriculum and Instruction

Service Options for High Ability Students

Guidelines for developing classroom activities that follow best practice in gifted education include:

- Focus on depth
- Emphasis on conceptual understanding
- Grounded in real world issues
- Constructivist
- Emphasis on higher order thinking and reasoning skills

- Emphasis on inter- and intra-disciplinary connections
- Develop meta-cognitive thinking skills
- Develop habits of mind of experts in the field
- Promote inquiry-based learning and problem solving
- Focus on 21st century skills

Schools use flexibility in meeting the individual needs of the high ability student. Options available may include the following:

- Early Kindergarten entrance
- Grade or subject skipping
- Cluster grouping by grade level/cross grade level
- Ability grouping
- Differentiated instruction
- Advanced Placement courses
- Internships and/or mentorships
- Interdisciplinary classes
- Credit by examination
- Note booking or portfolio development (Digital and/or paper-based)
- Honors classes/courses at the 6-12th grade level
- Advanced technology opportunities
- Project based learning
- The Learning Connection MSDMV High Ability Community tech resources
- STEM and Foreign Language instruction during and in after school opportunities
- Collaborative lesson sharing via *Build Your Own Curriculum*
- Anchor Activities – Choice of mastery demonstration
- Indiana Department of Education High Ability English/Language Arts Units K-8

Through the use of Differentiated Instruction, pacing of students through the curriculum at a rate commensurate with their advanced ability will be employed to accelerate learning. Differentiation provides tiered levels of services to meet the educational needs of all students.

Curriculum and instruction are differentiated in breadth and/or depth of content to meet the needs of the high ability student through activities such as compacting, acceleration, enrichment, assignment tiers, technology-based projects and problem solving. High ability instruction differs from the general education curriculum by promoting higher order critical thinking skills, decision making, creative problem solving, and use of effective research. Students engage problem-based learning and may delve into extensions in many content areas. Critical thinking and creative diversity are encouraged.

When accelerated pacing occurs, curriculum opportunities for high ability students to explore socio-emotional issues, attitudes, and appreciations of self and others will be a necessary component to foster social growth of the sometimes more introspective high ability child. (*See Guidance and Counseling Plan below*)

Professional Development

Professional Development is crucial for the classroom teacher to understand the unique set of needs of the high ability student. Differentiated instruction techniques and programs of strategies will be addressed through workshops held yearly through the Southern Indiana Education Center and Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) sponsored training. In addition, the Learning Connection, an on-line education data base maintained by the IDOE, provides on-going guidance in curriculum and instruction for high ability strategies. Each year, teachers attend ICE (Indiana Computer Educators Conference) and other professional development opportunities which provide strands of study related to high ability instructional delivery. Local blogs (Google Apps for Education) created to share information on techniques for instructing high ability students will also be employed so that lesson delivery, differentiation techniques, and strategies may be shared across the district.

Guidance and Counseling Plan

School counselors assist students to formulate an educational plan to optimize learning. Children with high abilities (HA) may have additional affective needs resulting from their increased capacity to think beyond their years, greater intensity in response, combinations of unique interests, personality characteristics, and conflicts that are different from those of their peers. It is important to provide a systematic and differentiated program of affective services for these students. A proactive approach facilitates development of their high potential and promotes positive adjustment.

The counselor's role may include the following:

- Support programs allowing HA students to be placed together for instruction.
- Collaborate with teachers providing professional development about social/emotional needs of HA children
- Improve the perception of the "Culture of Acceptance of Advanced Performance"
- Encourage HA student participation in extracurricular activities to relieve stress and make friends
- Provide career/college guidance appropriate to advanced opportunities for HA students

Systemic Program Assessment

The High Ability Program will be evaluated yearly to assess the impact on student learning. Measures for program assessment include:

Analysis of assessment data for identified students to measure achievement/growth

- AIMS Web tier placement
- ISTEP+ Growth Model Data
- NWEA growth
- ECA Pass and Pass+
- Formative Assessment data (including iReady Diagnostic data, Pivot Inspect data and Acuity data)

Teacher focus groups/surveys/input on:

- Program development
- Student selection

- Professional development
- Curriculum adjustment

Process for Removal from High Ability Program

High Ability students sometimes do not work up to their potential in all academic environments if they are not challenged sufficiently. High Ability students also sometimes have difficulty with relationships with non-High Ability peers and working with these students in a regular classroom setting; therefore, High Ability students should not be removed from the program based solely on classroom grades.

If situations arise that indicate that a High Ability student is not performing well, interventions should be planned and implemented. Prior to removal from the program, these interventions need to be implemented and a conference between the school and family needs to occur.

MSD of Mt. Vernon
 Identification of High Ability Students
 Parent/Guardian Appeal Form

Child's Name _____ Grade ___ School _____

Parent/Guardian's Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Directions: Please indicate how extensively your child exhibits the characteristics listed. Check the box that most closely corresponds with your observations.

Behavior	Never	Sometimes	Often
1. Has a good memory			
2. Unexpected depth of knowledge in one or more areas			
3. Exhibits perfectionism			
4. Shows self-initiative			
5. Experiences intense feelings			
6. Strong sense of right and wrong			
7. Uses an advanced vocabulary			
8. Memorizes many poems and stories			
9. Enjoys working with puzzles			
10. Interest in maps, globes, charts, calendars, clocks			
11. Desire to know how and why things work			
12. Likes to take things apart			

13. Describe briefly your child's major interests, hobbies, art activities, etc.

14. Describe briefly your child's reading habits, patterns, and levels at home, including when you noticed your child first reading independently.

15. How many books does your child read weekly?

16. What are some things you have observed in your child's behavior that lead you to believe that he/she should be identified as high ability?

MSD of Mt. Vernon
 Identification of High-Ability Students
 Teacher Rating Nomination Form

Child's Name _____ Grade__ School _____ Date _____

Directions: Please indicate how extensively this child exhibits the characteristics listed. Check the box that most closely corresponds with your observations.

Student behaviors	Seldom	Frequently	Consistently
Motivation (Evidences a desire to learn)			
Interests (Intense/Unusual interests)			
Communication (Highly expressive in words/numbers)			
Problem-Solving ability (Effective & inventive strategies)			
Memory (Large storehouse of information)			
Inquiry (Questions, experiments, explores)			
Insight(Quickly grasps new concepts)			
Reasoning (Logical approaches to solutions)			
Imagination (Produces highly original ideas)			
Humor (Conveys and picks up on humor)			
Dependability (Gets tasks done)			
Expressive (Conveys feelings, emotions, enjoyment)			
Cognition (Complexity in thought processes)			
The student ...			
Estimate own strengths and weaknesses			
Feels sense of own worth			
Values good grades			
Considers more than one solution to a problem			
Eagerly performs difficult tasks			
Is observant			
Wants to know why and how			
Is sensitive to beauty			
Shows ability in oral expression			
Enjoys independent reading for information and pleasure			
Has high skills/coordination in gross muscular movements			
Exhibits unusual ability in the arts			

What are some behaviors that you have observed in this student's school work that lead you to believe that he/she is of high ability?

Please give any other information about this student that you believe is relevant to his/her abilities.

Indiana Department of Education Policy Guidelines

High Ability Code: IC 20-36

- Identify High Ability in general intellectual and specific academic domains, K-12. Record this identification on the STN (Student Test Number.)
- Appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction in core content areas
- Reporting of program effectiveness, specific uses of funds, and student achievement.

Indiana Code: IAC 511

- Broad Based Planning Committee
- Specific written plans for:
 - Multifaceted assessment for selection
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - Professional Development
 - Systematic program assessment
 - Guidance and counseling
- Domains defined: general intellect and specific academic