

MSD of Mt. Vernon High Ability Plan



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 enriches learning so students can maximize academic potential, develop emotionally and socially, and become positive, contributing members of society.

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

Broad Based Planning Committee

A Broad Based Planning Committee (BBPC) is a diverse group of stakeholders, composed of educators, parents, students, community members, and other stakeholders, organized to review the continuous development and implementation of services and programs for high ability students.

The committee serves as the:

- Representation of key stakeholders
- Sounding board for programmatic ideas
- Keeper of the vision for high ability education
- Assessor of the degree to which program goals are being met
- Impetus for improvement
- Ambassador for high ability services in the community

The local governing body has ultimate responsibility and authority for all student services; the BBPC is not a decision-making group, but it serves as an advisory board to review policies, services, and outcomes. The BBPC is required to meet once a year, but in order to optimally serve the community, the committee should meet at least three times during the school year.

Definition of the High Ability Student

Indiana defines the High Ability student as: “A student 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. High Ability students may be categorized as “General Intellectual” or “Academic (Math or Language Arts) Specific.”

Characteristics of the High Ability Student

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

- Learns new things quickly
- Possesses extensive vocabulary and background knowledge in the domain of service
- Grasps concepts quickly and intuitively
- Grasps the “Big Picture” and connections
- Exhibits a more intense energy level
- Exhibits sensitivity in the five senses and/or emotions, possibly introverted
- Displays an interest in complex games, fantasy, or nonfiction
- Exhibits a great sense of humor
- Demonstrates a curious nature and is observant
- Thinks differently and/or creatively
- Employs diverse methods for solving problems

Goals for the High Ability Student

The high ability student will:

- Become aware of giftedness and appreciate uniqueness as a gifted individual 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 unique potential.
- Employ higher level thinking skills, which will motivate self-direction and independence.
- Build an awareness of school, community, and societal responsibilities.
- Perceive and formulate original solutions to problems.

Goals for High Ability Identification

High Ability Identification will:

- Follow a prescribed method.
- Consider both achievement and aptitude.
- Consider all students from assessed grades. (K, 2, 5, and 8)
- Consider underrepresented populations.

High Ability Identification Process

The two assessments used for student selection are the Cognitive Abilities Test and Math & Reading iReady Diagnostic Tests. The CogAT (used to identify students based on ability or aptitude) may be administered through pencil/paper or online. The assessment consists of three main domains: Verbal, Quantitative, and Nonverbal. CogAT testing is typically conducted in February. The I-Ready Math and Reading Diagnostic Tests (norm-referenced achievement tests) are used as an achievement measure. I-Ready assessments are given three times throughout the school year. Diagnostic 2 (mid year benchmark) is primarily used for high ability identification, with Diagnostic 1 (beginning of the year) serving as support. Both aptitude and achievement scores are considered during the year prior to placement for the next grade.

Students can be identified for the high ability program through one of the following pathways:

For High Ability Identification in Math and Language Arts at the Primary Level:

1. Through Performance: An outstanding score (98th percentile or higher) on a norm-referenced measure of math and language arts achievement. (iReady).
2. Through Potential: An outstanding score (96th percentile or higher) on a norm-referenced measure of quantitative reasoning or a composite measure of quantitative/nonverbal reasoning. (CogAT)
3. Through Additional Data: When a child's score on either the norm referenced measure of achievement or reasoning falls just below the cutoff, additional data from teachers and classroom work samples will be reviewed to determine appropriate placement..

The same process is used for grades 3 - 12. The achievement level pathway is 96th percentile. Tenth Grade students will also be administered the PSAT on a yearly basis. These scores will be used to identify students who were not selected in previous years. In certain circumstances, qualitative data may serve as additional identification information. Likewise, students identified as high ability will continue to be assessed and monitored to determine the best academic placement.

High Ability Identification Categories

Upon identification from the prescribed assessment protocol, students will be assigned the appropriate identification category using the STN (Student Test Number) in Skyward.

- High Ability - Math
- High Ability - Language Arts
- High Ability - General Intellectual (Identified High Ability in both Math and Language Arts)

Goals for the High Ability Curriculum and Instruction

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.

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

- Acceleration: Content is conceptually focused and is both accelerated and enriched.
- Advanced: Materials are written at levels of complexity appropriate for students with high ability.
- Standards: Above grade level standards are used.
- Critical and Creative Thinking: Instruction develops these skills.
- Individual Choice: Opportunities are provided for pursuit of ability and interest areas.
- Assessments: Require demonstration of advanced understanding, including synthesis, analysis, and evaluation.

Service Options for High Ability Students

Schools use flexibility in meeting the individual needs of the high ability student. Each school has unique opportunities. The number of identified students in each grade level and staffing should be used in considering the best service models. Schools have the professional latitude to use varied service models.

Possible strategies for meeting the needs of high ability learners:

- Early kindergarten entrance
- Grade or subject skipping
- Cluster grouping by grade level/cross grade level
- Ability grouping
- Advanced Placement courses
- Internships and/or mentorships
- Interdisciplinary classes
- Credit by examination
- Honors classes/courses at the 6th - 12th grade levels

Goals for High Ability Professional Development

Professional Development is crucial for all high ability stakeholders to propel the district forward and to address the unique needs of the high ability student.

Professional development should include:

- Staff licensure in high ability education
- Expert guidance, from resources like IDOE, Consultants for High Ability, SIEC, etc. to provide knowledge about identification, service models, curriculum/instruction, vertical articulation, social emotional strategies, program evaluation, and other relevant topics.
- In depth analysis of high ability resources to use with high ability learners (Ex. IDOE High Ability English/Language Arts Units, K-8, Khan Academy, etc.)

Goals for High Ability Counseling and Guidance

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.

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 high potential and promotes positive adjustment.

School strategies to improve social/emotional understanding of the high ability student include:

- Facilitating discussion groups and/or support programs.
- Offering guided reading, role playing, and/or journal writing.
- Collaborating with staff about the unique social/emotional needs of high ability children.
- Improving the perception of the “Culture of Acceptance of Advanced Performance.”
- Encouraging high ability students to participate in extracurricular activities to relieve stress and make friends
- Providing career/college guidance appropriate to advanced opportunities for HA students

Goals for the High Ability Program Assessment

The High Ability Program will be evaluated annually to assess the impact on student learning. Measures for program assessment include the listed qualitative and quantitative approaches.

- Discussion/collaboration of the Broadbased Planning Committee (BBPC)
- Collaboration between high ability teachers, administrators, and the HA Coordinator
 - Discussion should include identification, service models, curriculum and instruction, social-emotional issues, professional development, and other relevant topics.
- Analysis of data - CogAT, iReady, PSAT, and SAT
- Analysis of social and emotional learning, such as ‘Soft skills’ like creativity, communication, collaboration, and leadership

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 sometimes have difficulty with peer relationships in a regular classroom setting; therefore, high ability students should not be removed from the program based solely on classroom grades.

If situations arise, indicating that a high ability student is not performing well, interventions should be planned and implemented.

Criteria warranting possible interventions

- Scoring below 80% (average) in a subject or course for a grading period
- Class disinterest or disruption
- Other issues

If the above criteria exist, a meeting will occur with the student (depending on age), parents, teachers, principal, and the High Ability Coordinator. At this meeting the issue will be discussed and an intervention plan created to address the issue. The intervention period will last from one month to a grading period. A follow up meeting will be scheduled at the completion of the intervention period to discuss progress. If the student is performing well, the intervention should continue with an additional follow up meeting scheduled. If the student's performance has not improved, and the reason is determined that the content is too challenging or other rationale is presented, the student can be removed from high ability services. Parents may appeal this decision within three weeks of notification.

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

The appeal should be timely, within three weeks of notification of removal from high ability programming. Appeals made within this timeframe will be considered. After appeals are considered, parents will receive a final written notification of the decision.

Child's Name _____ Grade ___ School _____

Parent/Guardian's Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Please write your reason for the appeal.

Why do you believe the original assessment data was not valid?

****Note:** Grades and standardized tests (like iLearn) are not justifiable reasons for high ability placement. They are indicators of mastery of grade level content.

Parent's Signature

Date

Administrator's Signature

Date