

Asheville City Schools
Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Plan
Effective 2013-2016

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Asheville City Schools has developed this local AIG plan based on the NC AIG Program Standards (adopted by SBE, 2009, 2012). These Standards serve as a statewide framework and guide LEAs to develop, coordinate and implement thoughtful and comprehensive AIG programs.

The NC AIG Program Standards encompass six principle standards with accompanying practices. These standards articulate the expectations for quality, comprehensive, and effective local AIG programs and relate to the categories related to NC's AIG legislation, Article 9B (N. C. G. S. 115C-150.5). These best practices help to clarify the standard, describe what an LEA should have in place, and guide LEAs to improve their programs.

As LEAs continue to transform their AIG Programs to align to the AIG Program Standards, LEAs participated in a self-assessment process of their local AIG program, which involved multiple stakeholders. The data gathered during this process guided LEAs in their development of this local AIG plan for 2013-2016. This local AIG plan has been approved by the LEA's board of Education and sent to NC DPI for comment.

For 2010-2013, Asheville City Schools local AIG plan is as follows:

Asheville City Schools Vision for local AIG program: Our vision:

Asheville City Schools recognizes, challenges, and supports gifted learners as they strive to achieve their fullest potential.

Our mission:

We will recognize gifted learners by using comprehensive and clearly articulated screening and identification processes.

We will challenge gifted learners by providing resources and support for staff to deliver an enriched and differentiated curriculum.

We will support gifted learners in their academic, social, and emotional development by initiating and nurturing collaborative partnerships that involve the total school community.

We will continuously improve our services by thoughtfully monitoring and assessing our program with input from all stakeholders.

Our goal:

It is the intent of the Advisory Board of the Asheville City Schools' Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program to utilize the plan that follows as a resource and planning instrument to guide decisions and future action to improve programming for gifted learners in our district. This plan was

written based on an extensive study of our current situation.

While we have gathered data from all stakeholders during each of the years of implementation of our local plan, during the 2011-12 school year, our district embarked on an extensive journey to gather data from stakeholders to revise and "re-vision" our district strategic plan. The strategic planning process utilized surveys of all parents, staff members, students and community members. In addition, focus group sessions and private interviews with community members were conducted. The data led to a new vision and mission statement for Asheville City Schools and over the course of the year produced a new strategic plan for our district to follow.

It is our belief that the vision and mission statements for gifted programming align nicely with the new vision and mission of our school district - and meet the district's overall strategic imperative; which is to raise the achievement of all students - one child at a time.

Our new district outcomes and mission:

ACS graduates students who are thoughtful, innovative and productive citizens and who are prepared to succeed globally.

Asheville City Schools' Guiding Principles...

- We value Diversity and a Culture of Respect, and believe that these principles foster a strong community and enrich the educational experience;
- We value Intellectual Curiosity, Academic Rigor and Student Initiative, and believe that students will thrive when high expectations are set and when students have access to enriching learning opportunities;
- We value Exemplary Teachers and Staff in every school and Leaders across the district, and believe that they are vital to student success;
- We value Collaboration and Open Communication, and believe that students, families, staff and the community working together create an environment of success;
- We value a Caring, Safe and Healthy Environment in schools and the community, and believe it is essential to student learning; and
- We value our Community's Investment, and believe it is our duty to provide exceptional education to our community through continuous improvement.

As the strategic plan was developed, the voices from the gifted community were present at the table and a part of the discussions that followed, to ensure that the needs of gifted learners were kept at the forefront of the agenda. As such, many concerns and issues regarding gifted learners were brought to light and many of the new initiatives we propose in this plan for serving gifted learners were developed during the strategic planning process. It is our hope that you will see examples of how we have furthered our objective in making sure that gifted programming is an integral part of the total comprehensive program in Asheville City Schools as you delve into our newly revised plan.

Sources of funding for local AIG program (as of 2013)

State Funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other Funding
\$346621.00	\$30354.00	\$18000.00	\$0.00

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Standard 1: Student Identification

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

Practice A

Articulates and disseminates the procedures for AIG student identification, including screening, referral, and identification processes for all grade levels to school personnel, parents/families, students, and the community-at-large.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The Asheville City Schools system defines gifted students as individuals who perform or show 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 intellectual areas and specific academic fields. Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular education program. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor.

As our Advisory Board reviewed the extent to which we articulate our beliefs about gifted learners and disseminate information regarding our screening, referral, and identification processes to all stakeholders, as reported in annual survey and as agreed upon within our self assessment, we arrived at the following conclusions:

1. We recognize that while the AIG Staff makes great strides to share information regarding the AIG program (regarding services offered and provided and the screening, referral, and identification processes) with currently identified students, parents, and families, there were concerns expressed about whether or not we are communicating to stakeholders outside of AIG parents and students. These stakeholders may include those new to district families and others who may not have been identified initially within Asheville City Schools, but also those families within ACS who perhaps do not have an understanding of the benefits of gifted programming.
2. We believe the screening, referral, and identification processes are clearly established and articulated, however, there remains a concern from some stakeholders that there is not enough communication about our practices with both AIG parents and families, and with educational colleagues within our district.
3. The revised forms located within the plan itself and within each student's AIG record do establish that referral and eligibility review documentation is in place. However, with the numerous changes to our plan in the areas of screening, referral, and identification, the ACS Advisory Board does feel there will be a need to continue to follow the steps outlined below to ensure changes are clearly understood by all stakeholders.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: Our goal in the previous plan cycle was to more effectively articulate and disseminate information to all stakeholders, regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes within the Department of Gifted Education. To that end, we outlined many specific action steps to assist with this effort. With the changes to our plan in these areas, we now feel the need to update and in some cases, repeat those activities to effectively communicate the new changes.

1. Create updated AIG brochures with general information to share with all stakeholder groups at various times of the year (kindergarten registration/ open house events / during transition periods / as families transition into our community as a part of a registration packet of materials). This general brochure would be mass produced by our communications department and would also be posted to our district website. This brochure would also need to tap into the resource of currently identified students, by including quotes from gifted students about the impact of AIG services on his or her life.
2. Continue to improve our website presence on school and district wide websites by updating resources, stories, and information so the website is more user friendly. We also feel it important to include engaging/ enticing links or stories to draw stakeholders into the various websites. Over the course of the 2010-13 plan cycle, this has happened at the school level, and schools have even begun tapping into social media networks, like FaceBook to share stories and information about events in the gifted department, but the district webpage has been slow to change. We will continue to work on these areas as the district rolls out a new web platform in the coming year, so that the district site is as engaging and refreshed as the school sites.
3. We believe similar efforts are needed to create a better presence on the ACS staff intranet, with resources for teachers and other certified staff. As AIG Specialists have continued to provide staff development or have put together resource materials for teachers, those items continue to be added to school and district wide shared resource banks - like the school wide "U" drives and the Google docs so that more efficient sharing of information can occur. During this plan cycle, with the restructuring of identification practices (to include new identification criteria within multiple pathways), there is a need to help school staff and personnel understand and have access to the information as needed. This will also be a nice segway into using the web more interactively as we seek to soon delve into online professional development that would incorporate, amongst other things, information about screening, referral, and identification practices.

By updating our web presence, both internally and externally, and at the school and district levels, we feel that information about our programming efforts, as well as our screening, referral, and identification processes can be shared with a variety of stakeholder groups. However, the print resources are equally important, as we seek to continue to address the digital divide that can exist in communities with diversity of socioeconomic status - as we see in Asheville City Schools. Our Advisory Board will also continue to seek out additional appropriate avenues of sharing information regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes.

In the summer of 2010 and again as we adopted new identification tools, our district team of specialists revised the forms and letters that we use during initial screening and placement, as well as, the annual review process documentation to more effectively communicate with those students and families who are currently identified. We revised the forms to more clearly articulate the screening, referral, and identification process to all stakeholders, and in so doing, have made the

material more user/reader friendly and have provided an accurate reflection of the newly adopted plan for serving gifted learners in Asheville City Schools.

With the adoption of the new plan to serve gifted learners from 2013-16, there are major changes that will now need to be communicated to all currently identified students and families, as well as staff and colleagues. As such, our team has already begun the work to revise the forms to appropriately match new processes and services, and in the Fall of 2013 will continue this effort as we revise the letters used to communicate throughout the screening, referral, and identification processes.

Additionally, during our Fall 2013 planning sessions, the team of AIG Specialists will tackle putting together resource materials to assist staff and school personnel with the transition to the new plan, as well as, design materials to broadly communicate about our screening, referral, and identification processes to the gifted community and throughout the greater Asheville community as well. One such resource item that has been particularly helpful is the comprehensive "glossary" of terms to clearly articulate the services offered at each grade span -- and the eligibility criterion for each service. This is especially critical during those "transition years" for all parents and students to understand the subtle differences in the nature of gifted programming at the various grade spans. As such, providing copies of the glossary, in whole or in part, will become a part of our standard operating procedure as we communicate during the screening, referral, and identification processes.

This multi-faceted approach utilizing digital and print resources, which have been designed with the end goal of clear and concise material that is user friendly and engaging will help to meet our goal of more effectively articulating and disseminating clear, comprehensive, and equitable screening, referral, and identification processes for all stakeholders of the gifted community.

Planned Sources of Evidence: District and school brochure(s)

Website information - both internet resources for AIG community and the ACS staff intranet (for teacher and other certified support personnel)

Supporting documents and resource materials - posted online and housed within resource libraries

Forms and letters used to communicate about the AIG program

Stakeholder feedback (via survey regarding the screening, referral, and identification processes)

Other Comments:

Practice B

Employs multiple criteria for AIG student identification, including measures that reveal student aptitude, student achievement, or potential to achieve in order to develop a comprehensive profile for each student. These measures include both non-traditional and traditional standardized measures that are based current theory and research.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The identification process that we have followed for many plan cycles was developed to ensure that advanced students who need differentiated educational services will receive those services, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or disability.

Our previous identification process included one pathway consisting of multiple criteria, based on the work of Coleman, Gallagher, Harrison, and Robinson (Multiple Indicators of Giftedness).

Information was gathered from each of the six areas: student aptitude, student achievement, teacher observation of a student, student performance, student interests, and student motivation.

In looking at student aptitude, Asheville City Schools has aggressively sought out ways to identify students from underserved populations, as we fervently believe that potentially gifted students from culturally diverse or economically disadvantaged families and students with disabilities are often overlooked for gifted programming. Therefore, special efforts have been made to ensure that these students are recognized and served. Since 2002, our district has utilized the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) and then the revised NNAT2 - a reliable, culture-fair measure of ability for evaluating students from diverse cultural and linguistic groups, and we further recognize the 85th percentile as a sufficient measure of potential giftedness.

In addition to screening all 3rd grade students using the NNAT, or NNAT2, and most recently the OLSAT8 for 5th graders, for those students who are recognized by classroom teachers as potentially gifted, and then do not respond well to the nonverbal assessment(s), the school committee can make the decision to seek out further information through additional testing. In these instances, AIG Specialists turn to more traditional standardized measures, like the Woodcock Johnson or another of the approved instruments from our list of tests and inventories recommended for the AIG program (see complete list in appendix).

With regards to achievement, our district has incorporated the use of a 3rd grade achievement measure as well, the Stanford10 to assist with accurately assessing a student's achievement in the early fall of third grade.

Over the years concerns arose specifically with our implementation of the multiple criterion approach that required 4 of 6 indicators to be evident, often leaving students with the potential to achieve not identified for services, and with the tools used to assess information within each of the six areas.

First, there has been much discussion as to whether or not some students were penalized when unable to "jump through multiple hoops." In other words, by requiring students to meet a set standard in 4 or 5 of the 6 criterion areas, we were concerned about holding to the intent of the "body of evidence" argument that shares that within any single indicator, a single criterion may reveal a need for services; however, no single criterion should eliminate a student from consideration.

Second, some of the tools outside of the aptitude and achievement protocols seemed to teachers and other stakeholders to be subjective and non-standardized. While we were able to implement a standardized tool for gifted characteristics and motivation through the use of the Gifted Rating Scales (GRS), we have continued to struggle with accurately assessing a student's interest in making identification decisions, for example.

Therefore, while evidence clearly shows in our self assessment document that in this practice, we are completely evident, as we have used multiple criteria and have included both non-traditional and traditional standardized measures that are based on current theory and research, our Advisory Board felt that major changes were needed, if indeed we are to move our program forward. As a result, 1B is a focused practice.

Goals: 2013-16 GOAL:

1. During our summer and fall 2013 planning sessions, the AIG Specialists will research and identify additional screening tool(s) to measure aptitude and/or achievement during 3rd, 5th, and 6th grade(s). After reviewing available instruments, the group will determine an appropriate tool to add to our current screening and re-evaluation batteries to begin utilizing in the 2013-14 school year.

Description: As Coleman, Gallagher, Harrison, and Robinson assert, "giftedness is the manifestation of ability to learn well beyond the expected level of one's age mates." It can be discovered through outstanding student performance, high test scores, or through teacher observation.

Further, the group describes that in considering data regarding these criteria, a team must also acknowledge the following:

- Within any indicator, a single criterion may reveal a need for services. However, no single criterion can eliminate a student from consideration.
- A cluster of indicators shows a need for a decision and an appropriate educational response should be made.
- Information for any, and all, indicators may be used in matching students with service options.
- Information used from each indicator should be directly related to the service option considered.
- Information from specific indicators may be given priority for specific service options (e.g., math achievement / performance: advanced math group).

As our team considered carefully the body of evidence approach, the pros and cons we have experienced using our own student data within the multiple criteria framework, and our team research of best practices across the state, we determined that multiple pathways would be a better approach for our student needs, and would allow us to identify students in the following ways:
a pathway for the single criteria (aptitude) that demonstrates a strong need for gifted services;
a pathway utilizing multiple criteria (assessment and corresponding observation data) providing a comprehensive data profile which demonstrates a need for services in either an academic or intellectual area - without a single criteria to eliminate a student from consideration;
a pathway based upon an "on demand" performance task (or collection of tasks).

To that end, beginning with the 2013-14 school year and throughout the course of this plan cycle, Asheville City Schools will move to a multiple pathway approach to identifying gifted learners. There will be three pathways utilized to identify students as gifted.

Pathway 1: Intellectual Ability

Data for student reflecting high aptitude (96th %ile or higher on a nationally normed aptitude test)

Pathway 2: Multiple Criteria

Data for student reflecting a student's aptitude, achievement, and observable characteristics - as measured by the Gifted Rating Scales - will be evaluated to determine a student's eligibility to receive gifted services. (Student aptitude and/or achievement at 85th %ile or higher demonstrates a sufficient measure of potential giftedness. When considered in conjunction with one or more corresponding scales from the Gifted Rating Scales, for a total of three indicators, this demonstrates

a need for a decision and an appropriate educational response).

Pathway 3: Performance Task

This pathway is to be developed during the 2013-14 school year, so that our district will be prepared to pilot the performance task pathway in the subsequent school years and gather data to determine the effectiveness of this practice for review and continued use in the next plan cycle (2016-19).

INDICATORS OF GIFTEDNESS

Student Achievement: Indicator of a student's knowledge. This may be shown through a nationally normed standardized test score. (See Appendix for approved list of tools and instruments)

Student Aptitude: Indicator of a student's capacity for learning. This involves reasoning, problem solving, memory, etc., and may be shown through an IQ score or demonstrated abilities on a nationally normed standardized aptitude measure. (See Appendix for approved list of tools and instruments)

(Teacher) Observation of Student - Indicator of a student's need for differentiation, based on her / her observable behavior. This may be shown through the student's abilities in the following areas:

- The Intellectual Ability scale measures a teacher's perception of a student's verbal and/or nonverbal mental skills, capabilities, and intellectual competence.
- The Academic Ability scale measures a teacher's perception of a student's skill in dealing with factual and/or school-related material.
- The Creativity scale measures a teacher's perception of a student's ability to think, act, and/or produce unique, original, novel or innovative thoughts or products.
- The Artistic Talent scale measures a student's potential for, or evidence of ability in drama, dance, drawing, singing, and/or playing a musical instrument.
- The Leadership Ability scale measures a student's ability to motivate others toward a common or shared goal. Items rate understanding social dynamics and displaying strong interpersonal communication and conflict resolution skills.
- The Motivation scale refers to a student's drive or persistence and ability to work well without encouragement. While the motivation scale is not viewed as a type of giftedness, it is seen as a dynamic energy that drives or impels a student to achieve.

As we seek to gather comprehensive data to guide our decisions about identification and appropriately match student need with services, the ACS Advisory Board and team of AIG Specialists will over the course of the next three year plan complete the following:

1. Finalize decisions regarding the full complement of assessment tools for the 2013-16 plan cycle with the support of the Director of Testing and Accountability and the Director of Instructional Technology, and then carefully monitor the use of assessments for screening and identification purposes, in order to evaluate whether or not the tools are meeting our needs as a district.
2. Provide comprehensive training for the gifted services committee and teachers at each school to ensure consistency in utilizing the new tools for screening and identification and in a related matter, the AIG Specialists will communicate with parents about the use of the tools utilized and how this relates to services provided for students.
3. Participate in district wide trainings on the use of curriculum based measures within the scope of the Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) process. Our district is moving to utilizing the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) online assessments in grades 3 - 8 as a means of providing

benchmark data for students. These resources will assist us with making sure that ALL students are showing growth, and in the case of the gifted underachiever, the data may help us to ensure that appropriate plans are in place for his or her success. Further, this assessment data will be helpful as we complete our annual review of student progress to determine service delivery needs in subsequent years.

Learning Environment Options provided for students in grades 3 - 8; services are determined with matching eligibility criterion in the areas of aptitude, achievement, and teacher observation of gifted characteristics.

Service Delivery Options (descriptions and criteria):

ADVANCED SUBJECT GROUPING (ASG)

Students of above average achievement are grouped together for differentiated instruction in a specific subject area. This grouping may take place within the heterogeneous classroom or through advanced course placement. The AIG Specialist serves in a support/ coaching capacity for the regular classroom teachers to provide necessary resource materials and assistance with appropriate differentiation for the extension of gifted learners.

At least three* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 85th percentile or above on a nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*One of the three criteria must be a nationally-normed standardized achievement test.

CLUSTER GROUPING (CG)

A cluster group consists of 5 - 8 highly gifted students who are placed in the same grade level class with a teacher who is trained to work with them and devotes proportional class time to differentiating for them. This grouping practice ensures that the highly gifted are grouped with intellectual peers for a significant portion of each day. An AIG Specialist serves in a support/ coaching capacity to assist the teacher with finding appropriate resource materials and to assist with differentiation of the content for the gifted learners.

At least four* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- Grade composite of A in the core subjects (reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies)
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS

· Above average Motivation on a GRS

*The criteria must include a nationally-normed standardized aptitude test, a nationally normed standardized achievement test, and a grade composite of an A in core subjects.

COMPREHENSIVE STUDY GROUP (CSG)

Students will explore a variety of activities including, but not limited to, problem-solving, affective support, organizational strategies, and enrichment activities. This service is designed specifically to respond to the needs of gifted students who are not yet at the 85th%ile in achievement but meet this criteria in aptitude. Instruction is delivered by an AIG Specialist in a self-contained (or pullout) environment for a designated amount of time on a regular basis.

At least three* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 85th percentile or above on a nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*One of the three criteria must be a nationally-normed standardized aptitude test.

ENRICHMENT STUDY GROUP (ESG)

Students will be exposed to new ideas, skills, and concepts as well as going broadly and deeply into ideas already introduced in the curriculum. Students will explore universal themes and concepts. Instruction is delivered by an AIG Specialist in a self-contained (or pullout) environment for a designated amount of time on a weekly basis.

At least three* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 85th percentile or above on a nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- 85th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*The criteria must include a nationally-normed standardized achievement test and a nationally-normed standardized aptitude test

Planned Sources of Evidence: Agenda and minutes/notes for meetings to finalize decisions regarding screening and identification tools

Implementation of new achievement and aptitude tools

AIG student folders containing student eligibility and placement information; thus documenting the activities of the gifted services team at each school

Agenda and/or minutes from training sessions

Other Comments: One additional learning environment option for K-8 student is the INTEREST STUDY GROUP (ISG).

Highly gifted students are given an opportunity to pursue their interests as individuals or in small

groups to pursue an in-depth study with an AIG Specialist, community member, or other faculty member. In these instances, the AIG Specialist serves as a facilitator of student learning as the focus shifts to the students leading and directing the learning and being held accountable for new learning.

At least four* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- Grade composite of A in the core subjects (reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies)
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*The criteria must include a nationally-normed standardized aptitude test, a nationally normed standardized achievement test, and a grade composite of an A in core subjects.

Learning Environment options for high school students - at both Asheville High School and the School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville (SILSA)

Honors Level Courses -

Honors level courses surpass the standard course of study with the use of more rigorous and language-rich supplementary materials. Faster pace of content, with greater opportunities for curriculum compacting, advanced content, rigor and extended analytical thinking are characteristics of these classes. There is greater emphasis on student responsibility for reading and studying independently. The requirements for enrollment are listed in the high school course catalog.

Advanced Placement (AP) courses -

AP classes (offered through the College Board) offer a pace and academic rigor equivalent to that of college level courses. Students must be motivated to work hard to master the subject matter. This requires that a student be mature enough to assume the responsibility of reasoning, analyzing, and understanding the course content. It also requires studying the course content in greater depth. The requirements for enrollment are listed in the high school course catalog.

Dual Enrollment -

This option allows students to take course work at the university level while still being enrolled in high school. Students must meet the current minimum admission requirements for the University of North Carolina system (with the exception of senior English).

A-B Tech Afternoon College

Students can also earn high school and college credit during the school day by attending classes on the A-B Tech campus.

Practice C

Ensures AIG screening, referral, and identification procedures 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The AIG Specialists conduct a yearly mass screening to identify students of high academic and/or intellectual potential that may need differentiated services. Classroom teachers at all grade levels are notified of the referral process and are requested to nominate students who indicate a need for differentiated services. The most recent group achievement test scores (within two school years) and aptitude test scores are examined as well as other pertinent data available. The Guidelines Governing Local Plans for Gifted Education (Public Schools of North Carolina, Spring 2004) state multiple criteria including best performance over time is valid in identifying giftedness in all populations, especially disadvantaged populations. In so doing, "for identification purposes, we look for any sign of advanced performance that might represent untapped potential " and " the highest indicator of a child's abilities at any age should be seen as the best estimate of the child's giftedness."

During the screening process, particular attention is given to identifying students with potential for academic excellence who are from culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged, or disabled populations, since such students may show potential in unconventional ways. One assessment tool used in screening is the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test 2 (NNAT2). It is a reliable, culture-fair measure of ability for evaluating students from diverse cultural and linguistic groups.

Additionally, classroom teachers observe and collect documentation on students who excel or who show potential for excelling academically and/or intellectually. This documentation may include, but is not limited to, work samples, group test scores, student motivation indicators, writing portfolios, checklists, curriculum assessments, or grades. With the plan revisions in 2010, we began also collecting data using the Gifted Rating Scales (GRS), as it is intended to complement IQ tests and other procedures used in identification. Because the GRS contains some non-traditional scales; i.e., creativity, artistic talent, and leadership, this tool is particularly appropriate for the non-traditional or underserved populations.

Since the early part of the decade, our district has also incorporated Project U-STARS and the K-3 TOPS scale has been used as a key tool in referring students for gifted training. Currently, our K-2 nurturing component provides a specialist who works with teachers to utilize the Project U-STARS materials and resources and often referrals are the result of a series of these structured lessons and activities.

Finally, since the 2010 plan revision, all 3rd grade students have participated in both a group administered achievement (Stanford10) test and aptitude test (NNAT2). These instruments were utilized as a means of universally screening and then using the data, in conjunction with other measures to identify gifted learners. Fifth grade students were also given an aptitude measure (OLSAT8) as a whole group screening opportunity.

The use of both traditional and non-traditional assessments has been in an effort to aggressively seek out gifted children "from across all cultural groups, all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor." However, as we are making changes to our identification process, by shifting to multiple pathways, including piloting a performance task pathway, and our process will also include the

incorporation of new screening and identification tools, which will in turn require intensive training and support, we feel this practice must also be focused.

Goals:

During the plan cycle, the AIG Specialists will develop and pilot a 3rd pathway for identification by completing the following:

- a. In 2013-14 the team will research performance tasks used in identification of gifted learners by other LEAs and determine for which grade levels performance tasks are most appropriate and determine based on research which performance tasks will be used in a pilot as a part of the 3rd pathway for identification.
- b. During 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, pilot the 3rd pathway and gather data.
- c. Evaluate data gathered to make necessary adjustments to pathway 3 and determine whether or not pathway 3 should be continued.

Description: SCREENING PROCESS

Screening includes all activities designed to review the general population of students to see which students may need further assessment and / or eventual placement in the differentiated service options of the Academically or Intellectually Gifted Program. As advised by Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman, "recognition of potential means an appropriate educational response be made" and so therefore, as we recognize the potential in children, we must also make referrals for appropriate related differentiated services.

In our research of state best practices, one idea that stood out during debriefing conversations was the need to more clearly separate the screening and identification processes. As we have received feedback from staff regarding the amount of instructional time lost for screening activities (days of assessment with NNAT2, Stanford10, and OLSAT8 in addition to the completion of the GRS) and the practice of utilizing the resulting data in instructional planning was far underutilized, despite training to help staff to do so, it was determined that our screening process needed some revision. Therefore, beginning with this plan cycle, we will transition to a screening instrument that is short enough to glimpse a need for further testing, yet comprehensive enough in providing a picture of verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative ability.

In recognizing that the early educational experiences of potentially gifted students help to shape their learning habits and that it is therefore essential that young students with high abilities have access to appropriately stimulating and challenging education to help ensure that their potential is developed (Coleman and Gallagher, 1995), our team is also committed to the continued use of Project USTARS as well as other research based materials, like the College of William and Mary units to provide engaging and rich curriculum for young gifted learners. We will further develop a process that allows for a more formal use of the Project USTARS materials and TOPS forms more systematically as well as feedback from teachers having had students exposed to other rich curriculum resources, as we nurture and then make referrals for students for future programming. We also will use the GRS earlier, with second grade teachers to begin the official referral process at the end of the school year.

Beginning with the 2013-16 plan cycle, system-wide group aptitude testing for the purpose of providing some information for the screening process will be conducted in the third and sixth grades

with all students. Data from screening activities (completion of the GRS at the end of second grade and whole group administered aptitude assessment at the beginning of third grade) will help determine students who will need further testing. Additional standardized group and/or individual test from the list of Approved Tests and Inventories for the AIG Program (Appendix document) will be utilized for further testing to determine eligibility for placement within gifted programming options.

The initial screening testing is organized by the school testing coordinator and administered by the classroom teacher. Parents are notified of this testing by a letter, newsletter and/or calendar notice sent from each school prior to the test date. Information on screening, identification and placement procedures is made available to parents, other caretakers and community members in a variety of pathways, which may include the school handbook, PTO/PTA newsletters, the Asheville City Schools web site, Connect Ed messages, and a brochure placed in schools highlighting the AIG program. Nomination forms and other screening information are available in Spanish and an interpreter is used to facilitate communication as necessary.

As the student pool needing extra testing is determined, AIG Specialists will manage and organize further group administered testing using the appropriate measures (the CogAT and Iowa). For students with strong nominations not responding well with these traditional assessments, additional assessments - including the non-traditional and nonverbal assessments will be utilized from our approved list.

All data collected throughout the screening process is summarized on the Student Eligibility Record.

REFERRAL AND ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

Outside of the annual group screening processes at third and sixth grade, referrals are made to the AIG Services Committee throughout the school year. Parents who wish to have their child considered for differentiated services should discuss their desire with their child's teacher, and/ or the AIG Specialist. If there is evidence that the student's needs cannot be met through the regular education program, any of these stakeholders may make a referral.

The AIG Services Committee reviews the information provided in each referral and accompanying documentation to determine if: (1) the student shows a need for a specific service delivery option(s), (2) further testing or documentation is needed, or (3) the student does not show a need for differentiated educational services at this time. The committee's decision is communicated to the parents either via US mail or by hand during parent conference. Parents will also receive a copy of the following documents:

1. Completed Student Eligibility Record (SER)
2. Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP), if the student is determined to be eligible to receive gifted programming and services.
3. Copy of the Procedure to Resolve Disagreement form.

Furthermore, the gifted services committee at each school is charged with making every effort to meet and make a placement decision within forty five (45) instructional days of an initial referral to accommodate data collection using the GRS and to gather information from previous schools when needed. Once the decisions is made the parents are sent the documents outlined above.

PLACEMENT

When the AIG Services Committee determines a student needs differentiated educational

services, either a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or an Individual Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) is completed to reflect the committee's recommendations. Parents are notified of these recommendations either via U.S. mail or hand delivered to parent during parent conference along with the DEP or IDEP and the Student Eligibility Record (SER).

The identification and placement criteria in this plan have been designed so that "no single criterion will eliminate a student from consideration, any indicator can show a need, and a cluster of indicators shows a need for a decision" (Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman, February 6, 2007).

As outlined in both standard 1b and standard 4b, the services students receive are in direct alignment with the eligibility criterion outlined herein.

Students identified in Pathway 1: Intellectually Gifted will have an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) developed. The plan consists of a needs assessment, a learning styles inventory, and goals that reflect the educational, social, and emotional needs of the identified student. Strategies that would be suitable for inclusion in the IDEP might be tutoring to remediate documented achievement gaps, individual or group counseling by the school guidance counselor, mentoring, independent study, job shadowing, service learning project, placement in enrichment study group or advanced classes according to documented potential or performance, or other strategies that would meet the needs of the student. The expertise of the music, arts, media, physical education, technology specialists, or other faculty would be utilized to support the multiple intelligences that emerge as strengths of the student. The plan will be written and reviewed quarterly (using the IDEP Progress Monitoring form) by the Gifted Services Committee.

Students identified in the Multiple Criterion Pathway will receive a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) that will consider the strengths of the students in determining the appropriate service delivery match. Students may receive any of the following services:

With the ADVANCED SUBJECT GROUPING (ASG) service, students of above average achievement are grouped together for differentiated instruction in a specific subject area. This grouping may take place within the heterogeneous classroom or through advanced course placement. The AIG Specialist serves in a support/ coaching capacity for the regular classroom teachers to provide necessary resource materials and assistance with appropriate differentiation for the extension of gifted learners.

Within the CLUSTER GROUPING (CG) environment, the cluster of 5 - 8 highly gifted students are placed in the same grade level class with a teacher who is trained to work with them and devotes proportional class time to differentiating for them. This grouping practice ensures that the highly gifted are grouped with intellectual peers for a significant portion of each day. An AIG Specialist serves in a support/ coaching capacity to assist the teacher with finding appropriate resource materials and to assist with differentiation of the content for the gifted learners.

Students placed in the COMPREHENSIVE STUDY GROUP (CSG) will explore a variety of activities including but not limited to problem-solving, affective support, organizational strategies, and enrichment activities. Instruction is delivered by an AIG Specialist in a self-contained (or pullout) environment for a designated amount of time on a regular basis. As placement in CSG is based on aptitude, this service attends to the aptitude strengths but also provides appropriate support to enhance achievement.

Within the ENRICHMENT STUDY GROUP (ESG) environment students will be exposed to new ideas, skills, and concepts as well as going broadly and deeply into ideas already introduced in the curriculum. Students will explore universal themes and concepts. Instruction is delivered by an AIG Specialist in a self-contained (or pullout) environment for a designated amount of time on a weekly basis.

Highly gifted students are given an opportunity to pursue their interests as individuals or in small groups to pursue an in-depth study with an AIG Specialist, community member, or other faculty member in the INTEREST STUDY GROUP (ISG) environment. In these instances, the AIG Specialist serves as a facilitator of student learning as the focus shifts to the students leading and directing the learning and being held accountable for new learning.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Student eligibility record (SER)
Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Educational Plan (IDEP)
Professional development training agendas for use of new instruments (aptitude, achievement tests, measures for motivation and student interest)
AIG Child Count data
Data regarding student referrals, identification, and placement decisions (trends in data per school will be evaluated) - and presented to AIG Advisory Board and ACS Board of Education.

Other Comments:

The AIG Specialists will oversee an annual review of student progress to determine if the data suggests a need for change in service delivery options, in which case, a new DEP or IDEP would be written. In addition, a new DEP or IDEP is written for each of the three major grade configurations: elementary, middle school, and high school. Parents are also invited to an annual group meeting to discuss the AIG program and placement options.

Practice D

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

During the 2010-13 plan cycle, our AIG team of specialists worked diligently to implement strategies to ensure consistency in the identification of and services delivered to students based on district wide eligibility criterion. At the time, we felt that necessary as in the time just before the plan was revised, there had been turnover in the AIG Elementary Specialists staff and in the district coordinator role, which had led to slightly different interpretation of the identification, screening, referral, and eligibility criteria and practices. The strategies included meeting consistently with the elementary team of specialists to understand the new tools for screening and identification, developing consistent messages in training for teachers with regards to the new tools and assessments being utilized, and vertical meetings to move towards consistent application of the criteria when determining service delivery options in the transition years. While these efforts have served us well, and improved our consistency and efficiency as a group, because of the many changes throughout standard 1; separating the screening process from identification; utilizing new tools with screening and new processes in place for further testing; and clarifying procedures for transfer students, this practice will

remain focused and strategies will be developed to help ensure consistency in implementation of our new practices.

Goals: 1) During the summer and fall of 2013, the AIG Department will develop materials (e.g., brochures, presentations, flow charts) to be used annually at all schools so that stakeholders receive consistent information about the screening, referral, and identification process.
2) Beginning in the Spring of 2014, as a part of our 5th/6th transition plans, middle school specialists will participate with elementary AIG Gifted Services committees to develop consistent 6-8 Differentiated Education Plans for the 6th grade students.
3) By the Spring of 2014, the AIG Department will develop a plan to conduct an audit of randomly selected student files to ensure consistency in applying the new criteria for identification.

Description: During the summer and fall of 2013, our team of specialists will work to develop the following in an effort to ensure consistency in implementation of our new practices regarding screening, referral, and identification:

1. Resource materials and protocols to use with our AIG staff to ensure internal consistency with understanding and interpreting the new processes.
 - a. Local Plan Handbook for AIG Specialists. One major staff goal is to develop an AIG Program Handbook for staff to outline all practices, policies, and procedures for screening, referral, identification, and service delivery match. The handbook will serve as a resource for protocols in special circumstances and standard operating procedures to ensure we are all interpreting our plan in the same fashion and that both students and staff are receiving equitable support and resources regardless of school site. The handbook will also house practical resources for the AIG Specialists to use as needed; for example, a flowchart for all to follow regarding decision making after each step of screening and referral processes, thus providing a framework for decision making within context of screening, referral, identification and placement that is consistent and clear.
 - b. The middle and high school specialists will meet and collaboratively determine appropriate placement of gifted students, during the secondary transition years in the same way that the elementary and middle school specialists will be meeting to collaborate on the 5th/ 6th transition.
2. Resource materials to use in sharing the new processes, protocols, and materials with staff
 - a. Beginning of year presentation to share with all staff at each school. This training presentation would provide a general overview of the screening, referral, and identification processes and materials. This would be revised each year, but shared with each staff and made available via online resources.
 - b. ALL certified staff will have access to a training module to better understand the referral and identification processes for gifted learners. The AIG staff will determine most the appropriate method of delivery of the training for the various stakeholder groups.
 - c. Each school's services committee will attend a training session designed to ensure that committees are consistently making appropriate identification and placement decisions as each students' eligibility criteria are assessed. This will assist with the initial identification and placement of new referrals (beginning with 3rd graders). This can happen in district wide setting, where each team is present, or within each school.
3. Resource materials to use in sharing the new processes, protocols, and materials with families and the larger community. Throughout the year, the ACS AIG program staff will work to share information

regarding screening, referral, and placement decisions with all stakeholders with brochure and via online resources. This will help to ensure that information is provided for all stakeholders and all are using the same information and guidelines in making appropriate placement decisions.

In re-evaluating student services, at the end of each year, the Gifted Services Committee at each site will reconvene to determine appropriate placements decisions for the next school year. During this time, the committee will carefully examine the following pieces of evidence:

Achievement data in reading, math, and science as appropriate and available (NWEA MAP testing utilized across the district for benchmarking purposes).

Additional student aptitude data, as it is collected

Student grades in all core areas (as reported on end of year report card)

Updated version of the Gifted Rating Scales; during 5th grade transition and when students are being considered for additional advanced coursework.

In the case of the 5th to 6th grade transition, a middle school specialist will serve as a liaison with each elementary school's gifted services committee to ensure consistency in interpreting end of 5th grade data and determining appropriate 6-8 services.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Training agendas for sessions outlined above
Student placement information in folders (DEP, IDEP, SER)
District testing calendar (consistency in group administered assessments)
Communication products used to share information with stakeholder community (agendas from parent nights, website materials, faculty meetings)

Other Comments:

Practice E

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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Throughout the Asheville City Schools Plan to Differentiate Educational Services for Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students, there are safeguards to protect the rights of AIG students and their families.

As the Advisory Board has reflected upon the data gathered from stakeholders, there is a concern that as students transition between grade spans, there is a need to further clarify information about the eligibility criteria and how the criteria translate into delivered services. Additionally, there should be further explicit guidance regarding students who transfer from other local education agencies, and our reassessment procedures - through the annual review process.

Goals: By December 2013, the AIG Department will develop a handbook for clearly articulating procedures and best practices to handle situations including but not limited to the following:

- identification
- services determination
- reassessment
- annual evaluation of students
- evaluation of transfer students

Description:

The ACS AIG program has clearly outlined Procedure to Resolve Disagreement that was thoughtfully outlined to protect the needs and rights of both students and parents as decisions are made about a child's gifted status.

As decisions regarding placement are made by the gifted services committee, parents are informed through a Notice of Decision letter along with a completed copy of the Student Eligibility Record and either the Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or the Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP). Parents are notified of all committee decisions, either via U.S mail or hand delivered to parents during conference. If a parent disagrees with the gifted services committee's decision, the Procedure to Resolve Disagreement may be started. All parents of referred students will be sent a copy of this procedure with the Notice of Referral form. We will continue to use the established Procedure to Resolve Disagreement to handle any situations of disagreement. The policy will be provided for parents along with all committee decisions. A copy of the Procedure to Resolve Disagreement may be found in the Appendix section of this document.

As a student is placed in the AIG program, the DEP or IDEP created serves as a legally binding document to outline the appropriate learning environment(s) and content modification(s) based on the student's demonstrated academic and/or intellectual abilities and needs, as well as, social and emotional needs. Therefore, as we seek to serve the gifted learners in our district, we help teachers, counselors, certified support staff, psychologists, and administrators understand the importance and nature of these documents to protect the services outlined in the documents.

As we receive students into our district who have been formally identified elsewhere, the AIG Specialists will review the cumulative and AIG records of the student(s), write a new Student Eligibility Record, and schedule a meeting of the gifted services committee. At that time, the committee will recommend appropriate services and a new DEP or IDEP is written for the student. Parents are notified and receive copies of the Notice of Decision, Student Eligibility Record, and Differentiated Educational Plan or Individualized Differentiated Educational Plan. As well, the Procedure to Resolve Disagreements is sent to parents via either US Mail or hand delivered to parent during parent conference opportunity.

Beginning with July 2013, our annual review process has been slightly revised. The AIG Specialists start the review process at the end of each year by gathering new data for each student, to include achievement, aptitude, performance data and in some instances, teacher observation of gifted characteristics, using the GRS. The AIG Specialists work with the services committees of each school to analyze the data to determine if there is any indication that a new plan of services is needed. In those cases, the gifted services committee will make appropriate placement decisions and a new DEP or IDEP is written. Afterwards, parents will be notified, either via US Mail or hand delivered during parent conference - and copies of the new DEP, IDEP, and data are made available to the parents along with the Procedure to Resolve Disagreements.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Procedure to Resolve Disagreement (with documented steps of process)
Forms in student record - Student Eligibility Record (SER), Differentiated Education Plan (DEP), and/or the Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP).
Stakeholder survey data (parent, student, and other staff)
For any grievances that arise, documentation in student AIG folder

Other Comments:

Practice F

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The AIG Advisory Board has reviewed data from stakeholders, which indicates that most parents feel that there is appropriate documentation to explain the identification process and service options for individual AIG students. However, there is clearly room for improvement in making the forms and letters more clear, by making the language more parent (and other user) friendly.

Additionally, we seek to become more consistent with the annual review process especially at the key transition points.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: Currently in each student record there is a copy of the following documentation:

Student Eligibility Record (SER)

Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP)

GRS inventories used to identify new gifted students (since 2010)

Data regarding the annual data process for each child (to monitor student performance, student achievement, student aptitude, and the teacher's observation of student).

During the annual review process, if sufficient data exists to recommend any change in services for the student, the following steps will happen:

1. The Gifted Services committee at the school level will review the documentation and determine an

appropriate plan for the student and document these services in a new DEP or IDEP.

2. Notify parents of changes either via US Mail or hand delivered during parent conference. Provide parents a copy of the new DEP or IDEP, as well as, a copy of the Procedure for Resolving Disagreement and the data used to determine a change was necessary.

In the case of transition years, where students will change schools and grade span, AIG Specialists will provide information to parents and students about the eligibility requirements aligned with services delivered by AIG staff and other service providers. This exchange of information occurs in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, annual parent information nights, newsletters, and in the upcoming school year on the district maintained website - as we reenergize our presence on the website.

If no changes are recommended for the student as a result of the annual review process, services will remain the same.

In addition, to further involve parents in the identification process, several activities will be added to our current efforts. These include, but will not be limited to the following:

1. At the beginning of each year, during Open House activities, AIG Specialists will explain to parents what the service delivery options are for students identified as gifted. AIG Specialists will extend formal invitations to parent night programs - to further maximize the potential for parent participation.
2. During the initial referral and identification stages, AIG Specialists and the AIG Coordinator will seek to educate all parents about the AIG program - explaining the purpose of the program, the students targeted by the program, and the process of screening and referral for potential identification - using a variety of print and electronic media to get the message across.
3. At the school level, we will seek to utilize Connect Ed messages, email, traditional phone calls, newsletters, brochures, and parent conference days to make parents aware of the information sessions and invite parent participation.
4. To keep the big picture in mind, AIG Specialists will work on creating and utilizing a transition document to track impact of programming changes on specific cohorts of students and to understand the changes to expect in moving between the grade spans in each successive year of the plan.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Documentation maintained in student folders - SER, DEP, IDEP
Agendas from parent information night sessions
Newsletters
Information found on website - district AIG site
Transition documents
AIG brochure

Other Comments:

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.

Practice A

Adapts the NC Standard Course of Study (SCOS) K-12, to address a range of advanced ability levels in language arts, mathematics, and other content areas as appropriate through the use of differentiation strategies, including enrichment, extension, and acceleration.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

As stated in the "Best Practices in Gifted Education" document, our Advisory Board believes that children who are gifted learn at a faster rate than other children of their age, experience, or environment, and therefore, can often move through the curriculum at a more rapid pace that is more developmentally appropriate for them. Additionally, children who are gifted share the ability to think with more complexity and abstraction than other children of their same age, experience, or environment, and, therefore, require differentiation in the curriculum. Thus, when given appropriate educational opportunities, children who are gifted will become increasingly knowledgeable and, therefore, their needs for differentiation increase as well, when compared to others of their age, experience, and environment.

While the Advisory Board is quite confident in how gifted students spend his or her time when assigned to various groups overseen by the AIG Specialist, we have many concerns about how students are grouped throughout the day in the regular classroom and with the amount of differentiation taking place in the regular classroom environment.

As we have worked over this plan cycle to assist teachers in differentiating curriculum resources in place, we have also taken an active role in assisting teachers with the implementation of the common core and state essential standards. As our team has gained experiences preparing lessons utilizing the common core and essential state standards, we are better prepared to share resources, ideas, and strategies with teachers to enrich, extend, and accelerate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

At this time, while we have structures in place to provide a differentiated curriculum and we find pockets of excellence throughout the regular classroom environment, there are also areas where there is a lack of evidence that this exists. This lack of consistency coupled with new standards, since the implementation of the last gifted plan, and our district's new focus on the implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) gives us reason to move this practice to focused.

Goals:

1. Beginning in the fall semester 2013, each AIG Specialist will identify a specific grade level, subject area team, or department to work with an existing PLC to provide coaching support in differentiation in the planning process and to support data analysis and regrouping efforts.
2. Using the differentiation checklist developed during the 2010-13 plan cycle as a template, the AIG

Specialists will partner with the ACS Foundation's "PLC grant team" to revise and disseminate this tool; as well as, additional resources through the professional development offered district wide, by the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

Description:

In an effort to meet the needs of gifted learners through differentiated curriculum and appropriate pacing, our Board of Education has responded with Board policy 3130 related to the grouping of children for instructional practices, which considers the following factors:

- the individual student's best opportunity for achievement;
- the skill level of the student;
- the most effective instructional climate for the student;
- age and maturity levels of the students in the group;
- the most effective instructional climate for the group; and
- the most effective social climate for the group and the student.

This policy sets the foundation for grouping students based on the needs of each individual student. Additionally, in an effort to support all learners, district wide literacy and math coaches, as well as exceptional children's coaches, and others provide staff development to appropriately group students for content area instruction within the regular classroom. This grouping is primarily based on student ability and/or readiness as demonstrated through ongoing assessment.

Furthermore, it our district's belief that differentiation is an approach to teaching that advocates active planning for and attention to student differences in classrooms, in the context of high quality curriculum. Modifications can be made to content, process, product, and/or learning environment. Within our K-8 environment, students are heterogeneously grouped for the majority of his or her experience. Therefore to a large extent, AIG Specialists serve in a coaching capacity to support teachers efforts to adapt the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. This is done primarily through modeling of best practices and provision of resources for the regular classroom teachers' use to better meet student needs. The AIG staff works to research additional classroom resources that will meet the needs of gifted learners. When resources are found that are user friendly and will enhance the instruction for gifted learners, the AIG staff utilizes AIG funding resources to purchase the materials for our resource library, and then provide targeted staff development, as necessary, to assist the classroom teachers with implementation of such resources. Our AIG staff then takes special efforts to ensure that classroom teachers are aware of the resources - by listing them on school wide websites (the U drive) and also adding them to our comprehensive list on the staff intranet.

One additional avenue to support all learners, is found within one new district initiative, the adoption of the Dufour's Professional Learning Communities at Work (PLC) model to address all range of learners. During the PLC meetings, AIG Specialists can be utilized to help group students for content area instruction within the regular classroom, as well as provide teachers with resources to address students who know the curriculum based on pre assessments, student ability, readiness, and as demonstrated through ongoing assessment during instruction. As a part of this plan, our goal is for each AIG Specialist to formally identify one PLC team or grade level at each school to work closely with. The specialist would then build into his or her schedule time to meet regularly with the PLC team to assist with developing pre-assessments or other common formative assessments, provide resources for those students demonstrating early mastery, and assisting with analyzing data and

regrouping efforts as data suggests students are ready. This collaboration will support ALL learners and all teachers, as teachers hone their skills in assessment and instruction based on skill development and concept mastery.

In addition, the AIG program seeks to provide a variety of environments to serve gifted learners 3rd-8th grade. These include the Advanced Subject Groups (ASG), Cluster Groups (CG), Comprehensive Study Group (CSG), Enrichment Study Group (ESG), and Interest Study Groups (ISG).

ASG and CG occur within the regular classroom with the support of the AIG Specialist for those students demonstrating high levels of achievement or potential for high achievement and the goal is to accelerate the instruction for those who demonstrate a need for those services. With the revision of our service delivery model, ASG will be a more intentional and focused use of AIG Specialists, either in an inclusion model, team teaching, collaborative planning, the use of research based materials and resources such as, Jr. Great Books or Paideia Seminars, and/or Cross Grade Level Subject Grouping based on pre-assessments and PLC planning.

ESG is a separate setting designed to provide enrichment of the standard course of study, as well as introduce and expose students to a wide variety of topics to develop problem solving and critical thinking skills for those students with potentially high academic achievement coupled with high ability or aptitude.

Another separate setting service, the newly created CSG is a differentiated service that focuses on students demonstrating high or potentially high aptitude, but have not yet demonstrated high achievement. This group may focus on topics such as organizational skills, problem solving, test taking strategies, and critical thinking activities.

Finally, ISG is a separate setting for students who show an intense need for vastly differentiated experiences. The planning for ISG is based on student interest and learning profile, and to some extent is student directed.

Based on our goals in standard three, the AIG department will initiate a plan to assist teachers meet local professional development criteria and/or earn AIG licensure, so that teachers have the tools, skills, strategies, and knowledge to differentiate in their classroom; thus building capacity for teachers across the district.

To further enhance these services, our AIG staff will continue to work closely with the district wide curriculum and instruction team to analyze the staff development needs of the certified staff and provide opportunities to build the skills necessary to differentiate instruction within the regular classroom environment. The ACS Foundation Innovator Fellows "PLC grant team" will also build upon our differentiated checklist and disseminate the tool to all K-12 teachers to reference while creating their lessons.

Our district wide curriculum models respond to the unique needs of gifted and potentially gifted children through instruction informed by assessment. At the elementary level, our district offers a literacy approach that incorporates grouping children based on both reading level and ability. This approach provides modeling and guided practice towards a gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student as independent learners. As students take responsibility for their own learning, they are able to set goals and monitor their own progress. Students engage in self evaluation and

view learning as a goal in itself, ensuring that they are on the path to life long learning (ACS English/Language Arts Handbook, 3-5). Through our recently adopted Math Investigations curriculum, students focus on experiential learning and problem solving, and students move forward based on readiness. In order to assist with this implementation model, AIG staff work alongside teachers within the PLC environment to differentiate tasks within a meaningful context.

At the middle grades, our math curriculum continues to be accelerated by offering High School Math I to 7th graders and High School Math II to 8th graders, who demonstrate a need to accelerate at this pace. Additionally, we now offer an accelerated math curriculum course sequence to allow compacting of common core mathematics to get High School Math I completed by 8th grade for other high achieving learners.

For still other high achieving and high ability middle school students, we now have access to online coursework through the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) to enrich, extend, or accelerate the curriculum as determined by a body of evidence demonstrating a need for this service.

The AIG Specialists across the district continue to work in a coaching capacity to assist regular classroom teachers in meeting the diverse academic and affective needs of gifted learners; often assisting with the planning of unit lessons and Paideia coached projects. Often this collaboration also includes the literacy and math coaches, as well as, the Instructional Technology Facilitator(s) and Media Coordinator(s).

At the high school level, students now have choice regarding school programs and can select either the larger comprehensive Asheville High School (AHS) or the purposefully redesigned School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville (SILSA). With AHS, students have the opportunity to participate in many Advanced Placement (AP) and dual enrollment course options offered at Asheville-Buncombe Technical College (AB Tech). At SILSA, all courses are taught at the honors level and student portfolio presentations each year reflect student growth towards each of seven (7) school wide learner outcomes with the focus on inquiry based learning projects each year.

As we work to ensure that high school students in particular will be provided appropriately challenging and differentiated services, our AIG staff will work to ensure that in cooperation with our extensive 1:1 Laptop initiative, the AIG Specialists will work with Instructional Technology Facilitators at the secondary level to ensure that differentiation is occurring with the utilization of the technology tools provided. We can determine the existence of such differentiation through feedback collected from students - via the student survey section on end of course tests, measures of student learning, and to some extent end of grade tests, as well as student engagement surveys provided by the technology department.

We believe the variety of grouping options and opportunities provided meets the needs of gifted learners by addressing the range of learner ability levels across the spectrum in all subject areas. Our goal is to continue to work with regular classroom teachers and other certified support staff to meet this variety of needs by folding into the PLC discussions in a more formal way through collaborative planning and provision of resources for staff.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Lesson planning materials developed with and/or provided to regular classroom teacher by AIG Specialists (one example: the College of William & Mary instructional units and materials through

Project USTARS - PLUS)

List of resources on staff intranet (and school U drives)

Appropriate grouping of students (rosters of students with documented needs)

Projects developed in collaboration with classroom teachers and other certified support staff (literacy, math, and exceptional children's coaches, as well as, the instructional technology facilitators).

Survey feedback gathered from high school students.

Other Comments:

Practice B

Employs diverse and effective instructional practices according to students' identified abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles, to address a range of learning needs at all grade levels.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

In ACS, we believe that children who are gifted form a diverse group with a variety of needs, and require a range of service options. Therefore an "all or nothing" approach is unacceptable. In response, we offer a range of service delivery options that span the continuum of service by identifying appropriate instructional modifications as well as learning environment changes to meet the range of needs our gifted learners exhibit.

As demonstrated by the stakeholder surveys, we find pockets of excellence throughout the regular classroom environment, but there are also areas (along the K-12 continuum) where there is a lack of evidence that this provision of diverse instructional practices exists.

Our Advisory Board believes this practice will be strengthened with the implementation of the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across the district and because each of our specialists has been trained in the PLC model, it is the expectation that AIG Specialists will begin to more formally and intentionally participate with PLCs to support teachers in meeting the needs of gifted learners.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

Differentiation builds upon and extends beyond the North Carolina Standard Course of Study through the integration of a variety of instructional practices K-12, to include but not limited to: Paideia Coached Projects and the Paideia seminar approach, integrated technology for enhanced instruction through problem solving and critical thinking, enriched and individualized vocabulary studies, problem based learning units, inquiry based instruction, and utilizing research based curriculum resources for high ability learners, like those from the William and Mary Center for Gifted Education. We further modify the learning environment by providing opportunities for students to participate in accelerated learning through Honors level, dual enrollment, and Advanced Placement courses, and/ or online learning. Additionally, content pacing guides and tiered assignments for content acceleration exists at each grade level to allow for compacting.

As an IMPACT model district, we have experienced a drastic change in how we plan collaboratively for the integration of media and technology resources within our classrooms on a daily basis. This collaboration with the Media Specialists, classroom teachers, and the Instructional Technology Facilitators has provided great benefits for all learners - and particularly the gifted learner, as many new resources have been identified to assist with each student's development.

Differentiated curricula and instructional practices are further described in standard four (element c) of this plan respective to each grade span configuration.

In order to further assist teachers with planning for regular classroom instruction differentiation, the AIG staff, along with the AIG Advisory Board members have produced a lesson planning differentiation checklist to be revised for each grade span and shared as a part of a larger resource tool kit, in conjunction with a collaborative ACS Foundation Innovator Fellows team studying differentiated grading and assessment practices. The toolkit will be shared as a resource on our AIG intranet page and with those teachers participating in a professional development book study of Wormeli's "Fair Isn't Always Equal." In addition, the AIG Coordinator will work with administrators to better understand "what to look for" in quality differentiation experiences within the regular classroom.

In addition, as we look at data from outside sources to evaluate how teachers are progressing in their comfort level and expertise with differentiating instruction for learners, we will continue with support from the ACS Curriculum Council to plan and deliver, or seek out, professional development opportunities to support teacher learning. Currently, we utilize an "in house" professional development registration and evaluation tool, which generates surveys for staff development participants. This survey data along with the IMPACT surveys completed by teachers as they participate in staff development provided by the technology department and the annual professional development needs assessment survey distributed district wide, will provide us valuable information as we move forward in determining staff needs with regards to professional development in differentiation.

As we evaluate the data collected from students, across the grade spans, we can glean further information about how students perceive the level of differentiation - through choice of product, opportunities to work with other gifted learners, and level of challenge happening in the classrooms on a daily basis. We are also hopeful that the AIG staff can gather from the district wide testing coordinator and district wide data manager information from students collected on end of course, end of grade, and measures of student learning testing surveys regarding the level of challenge in the regular classroom.

All data collected will be compiled and shared with both the AIG Advisory Board and the ACS Board of Education.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Sample curriculum units, lessons, and activities
- Student work products and assignments (portfolio of work)
- Supplementary instructional resources (lessons infused with resource materials)
- Survey data (student and staff)

Other Comments:

Practice C

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Teachers need a variety of research based supplemental resources that augment curriculum and instruction in order to meet the needs of gifted learners. While the AIG staff has made great strides in providing resources for all to use and ensuring programs are in place to help this happen within regular classroom; it is quite difficult to keep track of how widely used the resource materials are throughout the district.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

Over the course of the last five years, the AIG Specialists and the AIG Program Coordinator have worked diligently to build a Resource Library that is centrally located for all staff to have access to during normal working hours and over extended breaks. In addition, a list of materials available for check out is available at each school and is posted on the staff intranet; this list includes lesson plans that have been created and materials that can be utilized in the classrooms.

Furthermore, the AIG Specialists have kept current with other best practices that are utilized across the district; such as the Paideia philosophy, Math Investigations, the student success team framework (SST) and the Balanced Literacy approach. One way the staff has done so is by keeping current with staff development efforts in these areas and then assisting the district wide coaching staff to differentiate in these areas - within context. As often as possible, the AIG Specialists spend time collaborating with coaching staff to ensure that the differentiation ideas are carried throughout the plans for professional development and in the delivery of content, rather than being introduced in isolation.

Moreover, the AIG staff continues to attend professional development outside the district; such as the North Carolina Association of Gifted Teachers (NCAGT) conference, Confratute, and when resources allow, the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) conference, in an effort to bring back materials and resources to share with regular classroom teachers, other certified support personnel, and administrators.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Lesson plan materials developed in conjunction with all certified support staff and the regular classroom teachers
Resources posted to staff U drive, staff intranet sites, and Google docs

Other Comments:

Practice D

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.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

In our previous plan, this practice was an area of heavy emphasis for our Advisory Board and team of specialists. With the implementation of the new teacher standards and common core standards, both of which placed heavy emphasis on the development of 21st century skills, we felt it an appropriate area of focus. Our initial goal was to identify content and skills that would enable AIG Specialists to infuse these 21st century skills into the curriculum at an advanced level in various settings - in AIG pullout settings, like Enrichment Study Group (ESG), as well as, in advanced content classes (through collaboration with content teachers), and in the regular classroom environment, in sharing resources and modeling best practices for regular classroom teachers. We further hoped to support guidance counselors, with respect to meeting the affective needs of gifted learners inherent within the 21st century skills development.

In addition to these efforts, we resolved to continue to develop relationships with various community partners and to identify new partners to bring these 21st century skills into the classroom using real world scenarios; learning simulations that better exposed students to the problem solving and teamwork kinds of activities that exemplify the P-21 framework. One example of such an effort is our partnership with the City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy (CAYLA) to provide opportunities for summer leadership internship opportunities. By expanding our AHS/SILSA Business Alliance partnership with agencies in our area, we are able to provide real world experiences for gifted students at the secondary level and as such, our AIG Specialists continue to encourage 6-12 AIG students to apply for opportunities sponsored through the community partners to develop and refine these 21st century skills.

Even with these pieces firmly in place, the Advisory Board has received feedback that we still see pockets of excellence throughout the district, and that the degree to which the skills are infused at advanced levels is inconsistent across the grade spans, especially outside of the AIG classrooms. Our belief is that this practice has made slow and steady progress because of the shift to emphasis on the implementation of the common core standards.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

Since the 2010-13 plan cycle, AIG Specialists have worked collaboratively with each other, members of the Advisory Board, and other curriculum specialists (including representative literacy and math coaches, instructional technology facilitators, and others) to research and find new curriculum materials (such as the MILE guide for 21st century skills, Costa's Habits of Mind, online differentiation support materials, etc) to support the implementation of 21st century skills into the variety of settings

and have also worked to align existing resource materials to support this implementation. While the group should come together as a whole in theory, it is more often the case that small groups of members come together to collaborate and then share the resources for classroom teacher use, utilizing technology resources to provide equitable access for all teachers.

This goal had made extremely slow progress as teachers, including AIG Specialists, are overwhelmed with the implementation of the common core. Interestingly, although the common core should support efforts of integration and collaboration, early implementation efforts with the common core have been very isolated, in terms of helping teachers to understand the content and new ideas around the themes and skills involved with delivering the standards. Also, we find an overemphasis on the technology portion of the standard, and are concerned with the progress of the entire standard; as there are many additional components of the 21st century standards. In that regard, the team of specialists will continue to develop lessons and materials to explore the remaining 21st century standards for implementation across the K-12 continuum.

Therefore, our team of specialists will continue our work in this area, keeping our goals intact and plan of implementation in place. As such, the Advisory Board will also utilize this district team of specialists to inventory community partnerships and help teachers understand the network of community resources available for the support of classroom instruction as it relates to the broader implementation of 21st century skills.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Resources list for supporting the P-21 framework

Community resources and partnership "inventory"

21st century skills that AIG Specialists will pay particular attention to within the gifted settings (with students)

Other Comments:

Practice E

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Advisory Board believes that because children who are gifted learn at a faster rate than other children of their age, experience, or environment, they are often able to move through the curriculum at a more rapid pace that is more developmentally appropriate for them. Additionally, children who are gifted share the ability to think with more complexity and abstraction than other children of their same age, experience, or environment, and, therefore, require differentiation in the curriculum. Thus, when given appropriate educational opportunities, children who are gifted will become increasingly knowledgeable and, therefore, their needs for differentiation increase as well, when compared to others of their age, experience, and environment.

In response, our plan for differentiated education service for gifted students aligns with Asheville City Schools Board policy regarding curriculum development and modification of curriculum and instruction guides for determining whether the curriculum meets the needs of the students of the school." (Policy Code 3100) As well, our plan aligns with Board Policy 3300 which states that

"addressing individual student needs is determined through on-going assessment and evaluation. As such, the Board believes that time is a variable in the educational process and that children may need different amounts of instructional time in order to fulfill the educational goals and objectives."

In support of our Board of Education directives and our plan to appropriately serve gifted learners, our plan provides time for the AIG Specialists, both in theory and in practice, to work collaboratively with classroom teachers and other certified support personnel to carefully examine a variety of student assessment data to make instructional decisions to appropriately respond to student needs.

Goals:

In the fall of 2013, the AIG Specialists will begin working with selected grade level and department PLC teams to support creating common formative assessments and analyzing resulting data to differentiate classroom curriculum and instruction across the grade spans.

Description:

Asheville City Schools utilizes several assessment tools to support gifted learners across each of the grade spans to grow within the educational program and classroom. Currently, these assessments include, but are not limited to:

Formative assessments - Our district has begun to work with teacher leaders to establish common formative assessments throughout the district to guide instruction. At all levels (K-8) where common formative assessments are in place, teachers work collaboratively with coaching support staff to analyze data and determine instructional next steps for each student. This often results in the "regrouping" of children across a grade level or individual classroom for a time to allow for both reteaching and enrichment based on content level mastery, following the PLC models (K-8). While we are making progress in the utilization of common formative assessment data to guide instruction, we feel there is not enough support staff and quality, rigorous instruction when students are regrouped for "enrichment" when mastery is achieved. At the high school level, there are pockets of teachers using pre-assessments and formative assessments to direct their instruction, but as there are not as many PLCs in place at the 9-12 level, the progress is much slower.

Benchmark assessments - On a quarterly basis in grades K-8 benchmark assessment data is analyzed, typically with administration and in conjunction with certified support staff (may include AIG Specialists, Exceptional Children's staff, literacy & math coaches, Media Specialists, and Instructional Technology Facilitators) again to determine appropriate instructional next steps for each learner. Also this data analysis helps to guide future plans for each grade level. Although we are a small district, there is great disparity in implementation of the data analysis process as different schools are further along the continuum than others. The district wide curriculum and instruction team has begun to investigate other companies to assist with benchmark efforts at the high school level and to respond to new statewide assessment requirements at the K-5 level.

Teacher generated assessment materials

K-2 assessment materials (North Carolina)

End of Grade and End of Course tests and Measures of Student Learning (though no data will be available with the MSLs until October 2013 and ongoing thereafter).

NNAT2, Stanford10, and OLSAT8 - AIG staff offer support in interpreting results for teachers as results come back to the district.

Other diagnostic tests and/or inventories - While our district has for the last few years experimented with using AIMS Web for reading and math curriculum based measures, the future of our district as a Responsiveness to Instruction (Rtl) model district is to align with the statewide Reading 3D and MClass instruments, and to also use other resources, including the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments to guide instructional decisions.

The new emphasis on the development of benchmark and other formative assessments naturally lends itself to a renewed interest in differentiating instruction for all learners - based on assessment results.

The implementation of the PLC model to empower teachers and raise achievement for all learners is driving much of the need to more formally assess and respond to student needs. In essence, answering the question, "what do we do with students instructionally, once data is gathered and we know the extent to which each child has mastered the material presented?" Again, we see examples of the PLC model much more consistently at the elementary level, but the secondary schools are beginning the push as well. The high school in particular does not have enough trained staff to incorporate the use of assessments to direct their instruction within the PLC model and have far fewer resources to develop common formative assessments. Our goal is then to work closely with two representatives from the high school who are currently on the ACS Foundation Fellows "PLC (differentiation) grant team" with two of our AIG Specialists to start PLC's within their subject areas.

The team of specialists believes that with our teachers becoming more intentional about how students are grouped, in response to data, that AIG Specialists will be able to provide more targeted support (essentially to fewer teachers) to enrich, extend, and accelerate students as deemed appropriate according to data.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Assessment data from a variety of sources (listed above)
Student re-grouping list (for instruction)

Other Comments:

Practice F

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The ACS Advisory Board believes that children who are gifted have unique social needs and may feel different from other children of their age, experience, or environment. Therefore, they may need access to appropriate counseling and support to ensure their affective well-being. As well, because

of their different learning and social needs, children who are gifted require time with others who are similar to them in order to establish cognitive relationships and to facilitate their academic and social growth.

As such, in the last plan cycle, our goals were to provide staff development opportunities (using a variety of presentation modes) to all staff regarding the social and emotional needs of gifted learners; paying particular attention to traditionally underserved students. We hoped to work specifically with guidance counselors, building upon a previous regional training using Niehart's "Perfectionism" work to better facilitate meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. This focus arose from the need to more significantly involve school counselors throughout identification and service delivery across the grade spans, but most notably at the secondary level. We further hoped to assess the level of competency and confidence with the following trainings - Adderholdt "Perfectionism", USTARS program, Donna Ford's work with traditionally underserved populations, and then establish a professional development plan to address the needs of our staff in these areas. Finally, the team of AIG Specialists wanted to provide, within the AIG environment, direct and explicit instruction for gifted learners regarding social and emotional needs and concerns.

As we assess our progress towards these goals, we note that the AIG Specialists conference and work with students and parents about how to support the social and emotional needs of gifted learners, often providing or recommending resources to support the needs that arise. We also note that while guidance counselors often have small groups and occasionally gifted students are being served in this way, there is not an intentional targeting of gifted students as groups are created, or to meet their social and emotional needs in a proactive way.

While we have seen classroom teachers working to incorporate multiple intelligences and learning styles to support the social and emotional needs of all learners and we see many classrooms, mostly elementary, that are creating environments that are much more responsive to the social and emotional needs of all children, these are still not widespread gains across the district, rather there remain "pockets of excellence" in this regard.

Therefore, as we group students in a variety of ways to deliver services, and to that end have even created additional service environments designed specifically with the students' holistic needs in mind, it is important to keep the affective needs of the gifted in mind in each of these settings.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

In order to reach the goals of this standard, our team has determined to continue working on the goals set forth in the previous plan, which encompasses a multi-pronged approach. It begins with professional development for staff to ensure that the specific social and emotional needs of gifted learners are recognized and addressed. In previous plan cycles, this proved to be a challenge, as there were no professional development criteria in place, and no universally accepted understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to build this base of support for gifted learners. With the adoption of our "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document, we have taken the first step towards realizing this goal. As such, our next step is to identify professional development needs for counselors and teaching staff to determine what follow up to provide. To that end, early in the 2013 fall planning sessions, our team of specialists will analyze the needs assessment survey conducted at the end of the 2012-13 school year; as the survey focuses on professional development needs and is

completed by all certified staff. Our team will need to assess whether or not additional data is necessary to determine specific needs for professional development regarding meeting the needs of gifted learners in the upcoming plan cycle. After identifying specific professional development needs, our team will work to create a plan to meet those needs that is both systemic and systematic and can be implemented in the 2013-16 plan cycle.

As the AIG Staff and other teachers and support staff across the district become exposed to specific curricular resources to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted learners, materials will be made accessible for students and teachers, paying particular attention to middle and high school students, as this is an ongoing area of need identified by stakeholders in programming evaluation surveys. In addition, the AIG staff will create a resource list of materials available in our AIG lending library for K-12 teachers to match data regarding the characteristics of gifted learners with resources supporting the social and emotional development of gifted learners.

A second prong in our approach relates specifically to service delivery with AIG Specialists. We recognize the need to provide counseling and organizational support to gifted students who are underachieving. To that end, the specialists will work with administrators and counselors to provide emotional support to gifted learners through a variety of support structures on an as needed basis. As a part of AIG Specialist directed services, specialists will also help gifted learners understand how to advocate for themselves in terms of their academic and affective needs, by teaching students to self assess their needs and select appropriate alternatives in a positive and productive manner. We believe that with our additional service delivery settings and a more intentional focus of matching student services directly aligned to students strengths and needs, we are one step closer to making this goal a reality.

Finally, there must also be an outlet to provide parental support through sharing resources and information, via newsletters, other support media, parent conferences, or parent university workshop sessions to meet the social and emotional needs of their gifted child.

It is our goal to utilize this multi-pronged approach to create affective curricular and instructional practices which support the social and emotional needs of gifted students.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Resource lists to share with parents, teachers, counselors, and others as aligned with the LOU and resulting professional development

Staff development needs assessment surveys - and additional survey data should additional data become necessary

Enhanced website presence - providing resource materials to support parents and staff - both external internet and staff intranet.

Staff development provided (list of training sessions, attendance rosters, etc)

Lesson plans created to directly and explicitly address the social and emotional needs and responsibilities of gifted learners.

Other Comments:

Practice G

Cultivates and develops the potential of young (K-3) students through purposeful and intentional

strategies and differentiated curriculum and instruction.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: As stated in our best practices document, we believe that some children who are gifted may not be reaching their potential. In fact, they may not even be recognized as gifted. This may be particularly true of students with limited opportunities to learn, especially before formal schooling begins. For these students, additional support is needed to offer opportunities for their potential to develop. In addition, because the early educational experiences of potentially gifted students help to shape their learning habits, it is essential that young students with high abilities have access to appropriately stimulating and challenging education to help ensure that their potential is developed. In order to address this area of need, resources have been made available and strategies have been written into individual school improvement plans that these will be widely utilized.

To this end, our K-2 Nurture Specialist is utilized at schools on a rotating basis to provide support in implementing research based best practices and curriculum materials with our youngest students. With the addition of a 50% staff member for the elementary level, current AIG Specialists serving elementary sites will have increased time in their schedules at each school specifically dedicated to continued support for K-2 nurturing activities. With this new approach, it will be critical to ensure equity and consistency with K-2 programming and experiences across each of the elementary schools. Therefore, our K-2 Nurturing Specialist will lead efforts to identify K-2 nurturing activities that are "non negotiable" and will further support the holistic development of primary students.

Goals:

1. Beginning in the spring semester of 2014 and ongoing, AIG Department will provide targeted professional development for K-2 teachers to support purposeful and intentional differentiation.
2. In August 2013, the K-2 Nurturing Specialist will develop a menu of service delivery options for principals and K-2 teachers to utilize in order to provide a consistent comprehensive plan for serving K-2 students.

Description:

The academic, social and emotional needs of highly able children are addressed in the heterogeneously mixed classroom primarily by the regular classroom teacher and through consultation with AIG Specialists, school counselors, and district wide coaching support staff. Ongoing conversations with parents are essential in developing an understanding of the student's strengths and affective needs. In addition, in an effort to improve the work of nurturing gifted potential in young children, our district employs a part-time K-2 nurturing specialist to add to our complement of AIG Specialists at the elementary level.

To date, the role of the K-2 Nurturing Specialist has been largely principal dependent; in essence, this specialist has tailored the K-2 nurturing at each school to meet the needs of the school population, as identified by school administration. While we see the benefit of this tailored approach and want to continue to honor the differences and unique needs of each school, we also feel there is a need for there to be some consistency with the programming and experiences for each school. Also, we have had an opportunity over the last three years to really evaluate which approaches work and which are not as successful, and we feel the need to direct and guide the process a bit to better support the K-2 students and teachers. Therefore, in the upcoming plan cycle, our K-2 Nurturing Specialist will lead

our efforts to develop a menu of service options to be utilized consistently across the district. Included in the menu will be samples of both whole class "inclusion" activities, as well as experiences for small "pullout" groups. While the menu will be initially developed based on feedback and experiences over the past plan cycle, each year the specialists will evaluate the options to determine programming effectiveness.

Through consultation with school administration, our K-2 Nurturing Specialist along with the team of elementary specialists has outlined and now provides advanced and enriched differentiated learning experiences before the formal identification process begins. In addition to small group pullout time with the K-2 Nurturing Specialist, these experiences may include the following:

- Individual teacher consultation with AIG specialist, to meet the needs of individual high ability learners
- Flexible grouping and regrouping based upon ability and demonstrated need
- Cross grade subject grouping
- Team teaching among grade level teachers and specialists
- Curriculum compacting, and acceleration
- Seminars and integrated simulations in Social Studies, Science, or Health related issues and dilemmas
- Curricular extension materials available through the AIG lending library
- Book clubs
- USTARS - PLUS: Using Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students~ Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students
- Literature circles (cross-content fiction, non-fiction, biography)
- Math extension and enrichment using AIG Specialist to provide enrichment materials and resources
- Literacy and vocabulary development
- Flexible grouping based on ability or readiness for core instruction (including "Writers Workshop" "Reading Workshop" and other components of the balanced literacy approach)
- Inquiry Science
- Utilization of the talents of all staff and specialists to implement creative applications and instructional models based upon students strengths and affinities
- Mentors
- Application of school magnet theme and resources
- Integrated Media and Technologies

Nurturing potential at the elementary level is achieved through continued implementation of the USTARS~PLUS project; a Javits Grant project initiated and directed by Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman, UNC-Chapel Hill. The goal of USTARS-PLUS: Using Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students-Promoting Learning for Under Represented Students, is to support schools in the early recognition and cultivation of potential in young children in grades K-3 from economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse families. Our implementation of this program began almost a decade ago in ACS as a roll out involving two schools and teacher representatives from K-3. The second year increased awareness and implementation to four schools and greater representation K-3. Currently, all elementary schools have officially implemented the USTARS program and have been actively involved in on-going professional development through site visits from USTARS leadership,

system and school administrative support, and the addition of a K-2 Nurturing Specialist whose focal area is the full scale implementation of USTARS equitably across our district.

There is also a parent/home component that develops a strong connection between home and school. USTARS lessons and activities have been shared with parents at scheduled school parent nights at different levels. The parent/guardian is provided with strategies to nurture the child in the home environment with activities that encourage development in reading and science. This program has also been used as outreach to the community through the respective elementary schools and within the Asheville Public Housing and Community Centers.

The model has a strong track record of success in improving student achievement and increasing student access to advanced educational opportunities aimed at closing the achievement gap. The USTARS-PLUS model is centered in the regular education classroom and uses science as the platform for helping teachers recognize and nurture their students' potential. To continue to strengthen the impact of our USTARS-PLUS implementation, the ACS AIG team hired our K-2 Nurturing Specialist in a part time capacity to work almost exclusively on assisting new staff to become trained and comfortable with the use of the resources and materials with K-3 students. While the role of this specialist has expanded over the last plan cycle, supporting USTARS implementation remains a major area of focus.

Nurturing potential continues through middle and high school through a variety of programs and services such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Individual Differentiated Education Plans (IDEPs), AIG Specialists supporting students through a variety of service delivery options, locating and pairing students with mentors, and counseling. In addition, there has been much focus on professional development district wide to develop an awareness of the unique needs of underserved populations through Ruby Payne's "A Framework for Understanding Poverty", Eric Jensen's work on the impact of poverty on brain development (and responsive brain-based teaching to students of poverty) and the Comer Child Development Model.

As we implement the strategies outlined above, we move closer towards our goal of providing intentional and thoughtful support for K-3 learners.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Comprehensive list of "non-negotiable" K-2 nurturing activities
Schedule of USTARS activities (parent/home night activities)
AIG Nurturing Specialist schedule (training w/ new staff and/or modeling sessions for teachers)
Agendas and schedules of other Parent Night, Curriculum Night, or Family Outreach activities which utilize K-3 Nurturing support activities

Other Comments:

Practice H

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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

In the 2010-13 plan cycle, our goals for this practice were to utilize the needs assessment portion of the staff development survey to plan and implement staff development focusing on differentiation for elementary and middle grades teachers and to make differentiation strategies for middle and high school level teachers available to all secondary staff on a continuing basis to practice newly acquired skills, utilizing the half day early dismissal days and on additional identified staff development days as feasible and available. We further hoped to begin meeting with district wide math and literacy coaches at the secondary level, as well as Instructional Technology Facilitators and Media Coordinators, on a regularly scheduled and ongoing basis to implement appropriate professional development for the secondary staff. Our hope was that this time would be utilized for planning and integration of gifted instructional methodologies and resources into the regular classroom, as well as, separate settings with gifted learners.

As shared previously though, our plans for this tight integration and collaboration was put on the back burner as the district began to implement the common core. Unfortunately, as the state wide implementation efforts for the common core were rolled out, the AIG perspective was not included initially and while we understood the philosophy behind the implementation time frame, the initial focus was not on implementing the common core with gifted learners in mind, but on a general working understanding of the new standards. In our local district this translated into a halt of all professional development outside of the scope of understanding the common core standards, and our plans to integrate gifted best practices within all general professional development were put on hold.

As our district has now had two years of common core implementation experience, and our district is moving to an emphasis on the development of true Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at each school site, our specialists and Advisory Board feel we are now ready, as a district, to revisit the goals of the 2010-13 plan cycle and bring those ideas into fruition.

Goals: 1. Each year the AIG Coordinator will review the ACS professional development survey data gathered in June along with the ACS Curriculum Council and AIG staff to assess the professional development needs of classroom teachers as related to serving gifted learners, in order to provide relevant training and support to certified staff.

Description: As has been the practice in our district for the last three years, the AIG Coordinator will continue to work with the ACS Curriculum Council to evaluate the needs assessment portion of our district wide annual professional development survey of all certified staff to determine prioritized needs for staff development. This survey is an instrument to assist with planning for federal programs, and is developed in a coordinated effort involving the directors of all curriculum and instruction programs in the district. In theory, the survey guides the staff development planning for the subsequent school year; in practice, however, this has only happened in isolated pockets. In our new strategic plan, steps are outlined to support this effort of evaluating staff needs to create a professional development calendar.

Our goal as a district wide AIG team is to also build time into our summer and fall planning sessions to review the data with the program coordinator and create a timeline of prioritized professional development needs based on annual professional development survey data; making sure that AIG staff development is included on the calendar at the beginning of the year and, as much as possible, work within existing calendar dates designated for staff development to provide opportunities for professional development designed to assist with differentiation strategies. This training should

involve modeling differentiation strategies, using plans developed during collaboration meetings to differentiate for gifted learners, training new teachers as they come on board in gifted best practices, and providing ongoing support, as needed, for all other certified staff.

The AIG staff will further collaborate with other departments on the district wide curriculum and instruction team to ensure that as professional development is offered, an integrated approach is utilized, so that as areas are covered, many needs are met simultaneously, rather than in isolation.

The AIG Coordinator will also work with the district wide curriculum council to determine what staff development topics are mandatory and which should be optional menu items (in an effort to differentiate the staff development needs for staff members). To assist with this process, the curriculum council will utilize feedback from principals as staff members have completed the self assessment and professional development plan portions of their respective evaluation instruments. Additionally, as our AIG Specialists will have folded into grade level/ subject area team PLCs across the district, we will also garner feedback about teacher needs based on the dialogue and discussion that result from data analysis sessions. As teachers work through analyzing data and appropriately responding to students' instructional needs, there will certainly be areas that teachers will need support with, and as those needs arise, our specialists will make notes and recommendations about professional development needs and planning.

Ultimately, the goal would be to ensure that as a district, we offer comprehensive staff development options that match the needs of our staff, and also match the minimum competencies as outlined in our "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document already referenced. The professional development offerings should be thoughtfully integrated to support teacher's needs, so that student needs are better met, and these efforts begin with intentional collaboration between district wide curriculum and instruction staff.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Results of annual needs assessment survey - as related to professional development regarding gifted learners.

Products developed as a result of the training sessions would be published on the ACS intranet so others in the grade level or department/ subject could utilize the materials.

Staff development - agendas, sign-in sheets, materials developed for the session (put on intranet site for shared resource)

Other Comments:

Practice I

Develops and documents a student plan that articulates the differentiated curriculum and instruction services that match the identified needs of the K-12 AIG students, such as a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). This document is reviewed annually with parents/families to ensure effective programming, a continuum of services, and support school transitions.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: There are clearly outlined services dependent on student assessment data as evidenced by the Student Eligibility Record (SER) and Differentiated Education Plans (DEP) or Individual Differentiated Education Plans (IDEP) in each student file.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: As outlined previously in standard one, students are initially recommended, screened, and data is reviewed to begin receiving services via the AIG program. In this new plan cycle, our district will utilize a multiple pathway approach that thoughtfully considers the strengths and needs of each student as we seek to serve each student in a service delivery option that matches those identified strengths and needs.

Over the course of this plan cycle, our team considered carefully the body of evidence approach and determined that multiple pathways would be the best approach for our student needs, and would allow us to identify students in the following ways:

- *a pathway for the single criteria (aptitude) that demonstrates a strong need for gifted services;
- *a pathway utilizing multiple criteria (assessment and corresponding observation data) providing a comprehensive data profile which demonstrates a need for services in either an academic or intellectual area - without a single criteria to eliminate a student from consideration;
- *a pathway based upon an "on demand" performance task (or collection of tasks).

To that end, beginning with the 2013-14 school year and throughout the course of this plan cycle, Asheville City Schools will move to a multiple pathway approach to identifying gifted learners. There will be three pathways utilized to identify students as gifted.

Pathway 1: Intellectual Ability

Data for student reflecting high aptitude (96th %ile or higher on a nationally normed aptitude test). These students will have an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) developed that takes into account the student's academic, social, and emotional needs and the gifted services committee at each school will meet on a quarterly basis to review this data to ensure appropriate progress towards these goals is being made.

Pathway 2: Multiple Criteria

Data for student reflecting a student's aptitude, achievement, and observable characteristics - as measured by the Gifted Rating Scales - will be evaluated to determine a student's eligibility to receive gifted services. (Student aptitude and/or achievement at 85th %ile or higher demonstrates a sufficient measure of potential giftedness. When considered in conjunction with one or more corresponding scales from the Gifted Rating Scales, for a total of three indicators, this demonstrates a need for a decision and an appropriate educational response).

For these students identified using a multiple criterion approach, a variety of service delivery settings has been established to match the needs revealed in the student's comprehensive data profile. Those students exhibiting high academic performance will primarily be served in the regular classroom environment with intentional and tangible support to both students and teachers from the AIG Specialist(s). Those students exhibiting either high aptitude or potentially high aptitude only will be served in the pullout environment with the AIG Specialist and will receive supports aligned with expressed needs (including cognitive and affective support to encourage academic achievement).

Finally, those students with both potential or high performance in both achievement and aptitude will be served in both the regular classroom and pullout settings.

Pathway 3: Performance Task

This pathway is to be developed during the 2013-14 school year, so that our district will be prepared to pilot the performance task pathway in the subsequent school years and gather data to determine the effectiveness of this practice for review and continued use in the next plan cycle (2016-19).

(For specific eligibility criteria for each of the service delivery options, see Standard 1B).

For all students, there is an annual review process to ensure progress is being made towards the students' reaching his or her full potential. As the data indicates, services may be adjusted and parents are informed of any changes via parent conference and/ or US mail.

In short, our district team and Advisory Board have designed a variety of programming options to more appropriately match the needs of gifted learners with services to support the holistic development of the student. We feel the new pathway approach and the new services (or redesigned services) will serve ALL of our students in a more comprehensive way.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Student Eligibility Record (SER)
Differentiated Education Plan (DEP)
Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP)
IDEP Progress Monitoring Record

Other Comments:

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.

Practice A

Employs an AIG-licensed educator as lead coordinator to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program and plan.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Coordinator for Gifted Programming in our district is an AIG licensed educator. One of the primary responsibilities for the AIG Coordinator is to work closely with the team of AIG Specialists and the AIG Advisory Board to develop, monitor, implement, and revise the local plan for serving gifted learners as the data directs. In addition, the AIG Coordinator works closely with the team of curriculum and instruction directors at the district level (our local ACS Curriculum Council) to make sure that the needs of gifted learners are carefully considered as district wide initiatives are put into place and as larger curriculum and instruction issues are being discussed.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

The ACS Board of Education is committed to continuing to employ an AIG licensed educator in the capacity of Coordinator of Gifted Programming to oversee the implementation of the local AIG plan. The Coordinator will also work closely with the AIG Advisory Board and AIG Specialists to continually assess and make programming recommendations as the data reveals a need for change.

The AIG Coordinator has the following additional responsibilities:

To collaborate in planning, developing, implementing, coordinating, and monitoring the AIG program

To interpret and share the program's goals and objectives to system personnel

To assist in planning and providing staff development

To provide input in and oversee planning and managing the program budget

To work in conjunction with AIG Specialists to improve communication about the program

To assist AIG Specialists in the implementation of service delivery options

To maintain accurate records regarding student achievement and participation with the AIG program services

To work closely with the Exceptional Children's Director and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instructional Services to oversee the program from a district perspective

To serve as a liaison between the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and the local governing board to ensure the needs of gifted learners are met

To continue his or her own professional growth and development specifically in the area of gifted education.

To advocate for gifted learners at the classroom, school, district, regional, and state level as opportunities arise.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

AIG Coordinator job description with qualifications

AIG Coordinator performance evaluations

Meeting agendas and minutes for the Advisory Board, collaborative planning sessions with AIG specialists (may also include and involve the content area coaches across the district).

Staff development agendas (with individual schools and across grade and subject area groups, as a part of the larger district wide professional development emphasis).

Fiscal records (from annual internal audit)

360 degree evaluation data - via survey from AIG Specialists, school staff/ personnel, other district wide directors, and superintendent.

Other Comments:

Practice B

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

During the past three year plan cycle, the AIG Coordinator worked with each school administrator to ensure that each of the AIG Specialists is able to spend 100% of the school day instructing and supporting gifted learners. Our goal is to maintain this standard throughout the new plan cycle and in the years to come.

Additionally, the team of AIG Specialists works collaboratively with each other to share resources and lesson planning materials both within and across the grade spans. AIG Specialists at the K-8 level also have explicit opportunities to work with content area coaches across the district to assess the staff development needs of teachers and provide for those needs in an ongoing manner as opportunities are available. Throughout the next three year plan cycle, we will work to strengthen those collaborative efforts.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

To begin the 2013-14 school year, the AIG team will experience an increase in staffing, so that we will have 3.5 AIG Specialists serving the elementary population; 2.25 AIG Specialists serving the middle school population; and .50 AIG Specialist(s) serving high school students. Over the course of the last two years, we have been able to increase our K-2 Nurturing Specialist from 25 - 50% and this additional increase of 1.0 total position has been split into chunks to support the needs across the K-12 continuum. Thus, over the course of the previous plan cycle, we see a 50% increase in staffing at the elementary level and a total of 50% increase at the secondary level (25% each to the middle and high schools). The Asheville City Schools' Plan for Gifted Services outlines the expectations of the AIG Specialist as follows:

To plan and model appropriate research based instructional strategies (in accordance with gifted best practices)

To select appropriate curriculum and materials for gifted learners

To serve as a resource for staff - through collaborative efforts with content area coaches, grade and department level PLC meetings, and individual coaching opportunities.

To serve as a resource for students and parents

To maintain accurate records of all students receiving AIG services in one capacity or another

To work with students to provide designated service delivery options

To meet state and local requirements for employment and continue training in gifted education (to obtain either AIG certification or further to pursue a master's degree in gifted education).

To guide and direct the actions of the Gifted Services Committee at each school site. Each school will establish a GSC which shall consist of the following: a school wide AIG Specialist, an administrator, a counselor, and additional faculty member(s). This committee is responsible for reviewing all documentation for students who are referred for consideration for differentiated educational services, and making recommendations regarding further testing or services needed for each referred student. If differentiated services are needed this committee completes a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individual Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) for that student. This committee is also responsible for creating a new DEP or IDEP as the data from the annual review directs.

In an effort to have an opportunity to focus on the tasks as they are outlined above, the AIG Coordinator continues to work closely with the building administrators to ensure that AIG Specialists will have 100% of the time allotted in the AIG Specialist schedule to be used to serve gifted students, rather than for other teaching assignments.

In addition to the time the AIG Specialists spend with students, in the direct teaching environment, this intense focus would also include the continued support and time for the AIG Specialists to collaborate and work with classroom teachers to better meet the needs of the gifted learners. This support may present itself in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, co-planning units of study and individual lessons with teachers, providing and demonstrating the use of supplemental resource materials to be used in the daily classroom experience (for example, the research based College of William and Mary curricular resource materials currently used throughout the elementary and middle school(s)), modeling lessons utilizing research based materials and/or gifted methodology, co-teaching, assistance with disaggregation of data from various assessments utilized throughout the year, and providing materials to enrich, extend, and accelerate the curriculum appropriately.

Similarly, there should be time allocated for AIG Specialists to collaborate and work with other district wide specialists in order to better meet the needs of the regular classroom teachers working with gifted learners. Interestingly, with the adoption of the common core standards and several key district wide initiatives, there have been limited opportunities for AIG Specialists to come together with other certified support staff in any organized way to plan and implement cohesive staff development in

support of teachers that directly relates to serving gifted learners. During this three year plan cycle, it is our goal to purposefully meet and plan with other certified support staff in a consistent and on-going fashion to help meet this need. The end result would be the development and implementation of thoughtful, purposeful, and aligned staff development that better serves our teachers and students in a cohesive way. The target support audience would be literacy, science, math and exceptional children coaches, as well as instructional technology facilitators, and media coordinators. It is our goal to work with this group to infuse gifted best practices and methods as new staff development is presented. The outcome would be to share the professional development with all teachers, counselors, and other resource teachers (visual and performing arts in addition to career and technical education teachers) to support the instruction of gifted students. Additionally, the AIG Department will explore and provide training opportunities for school counselors (and other certified support staff; ie, school psychologists, social workers, and others) to better meet the affective needs of gifted learners.

We believe this will be made possible, in part because of the districts' emphasis on the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs) at the school level. In an effort to support this initiative, all of the district AIG Specialists and the AIG Program Coordinator have been trained in the DuFour model being implemented across the district and as such are well poised to support teachers, as we seek to assist in analyzing data and helping teachers to answer the question of "what do we do with students who have already mastered this material?" It is our belief that with this model being emphasized across the district, and with our program specialists all trained, we can be an invaluable support to teachers as we take the next step forward with differentiated learning.

As our population continues to grow (currently we have 24% of our K-12 students identified as gifted at some level), our program coordinator is still working with district wide administration and the Board of Education to identify resources that will allow the district to further support gifted students by providing additional staff. While our ultimate goal would be to be able to employ a full time AIG Specialist to serve high school students, our district's recent increase will allow us to increase our services for 9-12 students from 25% to 50%. After having investigated many models of successful programming efforts on the part of high school AIG Specialists, and having dedicated time in the upcoming school year to gather input from high school students, families, and other stakeholders, we are confident that the job description of the 50% High School AIG Specialist will meet the unique needs of our gifted learners. During the next year, and continuing thereafter, we will evaluate the high school programming component to continue to bring this issue forward to the attention of our school board and superintendent in an effort to advocate for greater service time with high school students, thus propelling the district moving forward in providing high quality gifted programming for all students across the K-12 continuum.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Teaching schedule of AIG Specialists
Reallocation of resource persons (with the addition of 1.0 full position for gifted learners)
Stakeholder surveys - specifically from staff members to evaluate support and resources provided by the AIG Department.

Other Comments:

Each year, we will continue to evaluate our student numbers across the K-12 span to make sure that we are wisely advocating for additional service time (through staffing) wherever needed, paying close attention to the caseloads of the AIG Specialists. One example of increasing need can be seen

at the middle school, where we have seen the overall enrollment continue to rise and we continue to provide unique service options that appeal to middle school students. In the course of the last school year, we have embarked upon online learning opportunities through the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS), while we have simultaneously expanded our accelerated math options. These services have attracted many students either back to our middle school, or kept them from leaving at the end of the elementary time, as parents and students are made aware of the accelerated options. Therefore, it is on our radar to continue to monitor the numbers of identified students at the middle school specifically to address the potential need for additional staff to address student and teacher needs.

Practice 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Currently there are not professional development requirements for those outside of AIG Specialists and the district wide AIG Program Coordinator. The team of AIG Specialists attends the NCAGT conference together and as feasible others throughout the district are also encouraged to attend. In addition, as relevant professional development activities are available, the AIG team of specialists participate to better provide resources and support for regular classroom teachers and other certified support personnel.

As the AIG Advisory Board evaluated the placement of students and compared this information to teacher training, it was determined that there are currently no professional development requirements for working with AIG students. Often at the secondary level, the decision for assignments for teaching Honors and AP courses is not connected with any particular professional development requirements (outside of the course content knowledge and expertise). At the middle school, in theory, in order to teach a cluster group, you are required to have advanced training in gifted methodology. In practice, not enough professional development is offered, either locally or regionally, to ensure that this happens. There are "pockets of excellence" in the schools - as some teachers regularly request the assistance of an AIG Specialist to plan appropriately for clustered students; however, not every cluster of students is adequately provided for, with respect to academic, intellectual, social, and/or emotional needs. Across the district, there are 15 total certified staff members (only 3% of our certified staff) who have AIG add-on licensure; of those only 6 are regular classroom teachers (including elective area teacher). Therefore, students are routinely placed in cluster groups with teachers who are not trained to specifically meet the needs of gifted learners.

Goals: 1. In the 2013-14 school year, the AIG staff will adopt the "Levels of Understanding" document which outlines the minimum competencies and professional development expectations for personnel who work with/ teach gifted learners; in order to better meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of these students.

2. By June 2016, Asheville City Schools will have increased the number of regular classroom teachers with add-on AIG licensure or who have met the local professional development criteria by 5 - 10 teachers per school.

3. During this plan cycle, the AIG Department will work with our regional counterparts and the Western Regional Education Service Alliance (WRESA) to provide local/regional staff development that will address the needs of gifted learners and will help teachers and other related professionals (including administrators, exceptional children's personnel, and counselors) better meet the needs of gifted learners.

Description: Our vision for professional development in gifted education is to first link teachers and other certified support personnel with necessary resources and support to best meet the needs of gifted learners. When appropriate, we will find a variety of media to provide the staff development, and then offer follow through support for teachers afterwards within their own professional learning communities and individual classrooms. This allows the AIG Specialist to serve in a coaching capacity, often modeling best practices and/or helping the teacher to organize materials, lessons, and assessments utilizing gifted methodology.

In an effort to gain new understandings about gifted learners and best practices in gifted education, the AIG Department also values modeling the philosophy of researching best practices and implementing on a small scale with coaching support to determine effectiveness, as well. For example, over the course of the 2010-13 plan cycle, the team of AIG Specialists began a research project to find those celebrated "pockets of excellence" across the state to help us find ways to strengthen areas in our own programming that we felt needed additional support. Many of these ideas were generated while attending the NCAAGT conference and hearing from specialists in our field across the state, while other ideas for further study came as a result of reviewing many other local plans for serving gifted learners. As a result of our own "Pockets of Excellence" tours, and our continued collaboration with AIG Specialists and Program Coordinators across the state, we have included many new ideas throughout our plan for serving gifted learners. Another example, is the time dedicated to studying current research and ideology and relating this new knowledge to gifted programming. Our team considered the work of Carol Dweck (Mindset) while researching new ideas and resources through an in-depth book study. Ideas explored during this book study have also surfaced within this plan. As a result of the success of the study of her work, our team is scheduled next to study, "Learning by Doing" (DuFour), "Fair Isn't Always Equal" (Wormeli), and "Drive" (Pink) in support of new district wide initiatives and efforts to strengthen our own support of gifted programming.

In addition, our team of specialists seeks out new sources of professional development funding to further engage in our own learning and thereby enhance our services to gifted learners. As such, our team has written additional grants, through our Asheville City Schools Foundation (ACSF), to support our direct learning of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model and the Total School Cluster Grouping Model, by attending Confratute at the University of Connecticut; enhancing our understanding of the Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) model and varied methods of technology integration for gifted learners by attending the East Carolina University (ECU) "One Day/ Drive In" conference for gifted learners; and helping us to understand the concept behind professional learning communities by attending the DuFour "PLCs at Work conference" (both as a part of an ACSF grant team in San Diego, California and sending an additional team of participants to the training here in Asheville, NC).

After each of these learning opportunities, our team of specialists engages in dialogue to "debrief" the experiences and work together to create strategies to make sure we put the new knowledge gained to good use; i.e., trouble shooting implementation methods for a particular strategy, identifying funds or other resources to bring a new program, strategy, or material into use. We have found these

debriefing sessions to be invaluable and therefore will expand those sessions to become a part of our monthly district wide team meeting agendas in the upcoming school year (and beyond). Because current professional development offerings address a variety of practices for gifted learners but are not identified as such, it will also be the work of the AIG staff to help the district wide curriculum and instruction team to align these practices with best practices in gifted education in an explicit manner. To that end, AIG Specialists will continue to work collaboratively with the content area coaches to include AIG best practices in staff development offerings presented to staff; for example throughout the balanced literacy, integrated media/technology, and math foundations workshops, AIG Specialists will work with content coaches to integrate gifted methodology and best practices at the outset. In essence, rather than learning in an isolation approach, the AIG Specialists will spend time with teachers as they are learning new curricular materials and methods, to share how to utilize the materials to benefit the gifted learner, so that the expectation of differentiating for all learners is clear from the beginning and not as an "after thought."

Keeping the end in mind, it is the goal of the ACS AIG Advisory Board to ensure that those teachers working with gifted learners in the regular classroom will participate in staff development that is targeted and appropriate to help them meet the specific academic, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of the gifted learner. To that end, and as a result of research conducted by the AIG team of best practices across the state, we determined minimum course competencies expected for teachers of the gifted (as well as other stakeholders) to ensure maximum student learning and growth for these learners and have outlined these in our "Levels of Understanding" document to meet local professional development criteria.

In reference to professional development for other certified staff, the AIG Advisory Board recognizes that only 8% of teachers in Asheville City Schools have AIG Certification and/or specialized training in gifted education. Additionally, 73% of beginning teachers surveyed in our annual professional development survey responded that assistance with understanding and meeting the needs of highly capable learners was either "a critical area of need" or "very important to their future success in the classroom."

As a result, the Advisory Board reviewed and revised a "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document (found during our Pockets of Excellence research) to clearly outline the minimum knowledge and competencies for all certified staff as it relates to working with the gifted learner. To support more individuals in meeting the outlined expectations within the LOU, the Advisory Board along with the AIG staff will take an active role in both encouraging more teachers to work towards acquiring AIG training and will advocate with the Board of Education and leadership team to ensure that support is provided to make sure these needs are met. The first step will be to make the information available about professional development that is readily available outside of our district through the various university programs offering AIG Licensure coursework. We currently have a close partnership with Western Carolina University established, and with the courses readily available online, in the 2013-14 school year, we will encourage a variety of certified personnel to begin a cohort of Asheville City Schools' teachers to begin the process towards earning gifted licensure. Our Advisory Board felt that an important factor in motivating and supporting teachers with this licensure effort was to make funds available to help with making the feasibility of participation in such experiences a reality.

Therefore, the AIG Program Coordinator has worked closely iwth the Superintendent, Title II Director, and with the Chief Financial Officer to set aside funds to assist staff members who wish to add gifted education as an area of certification. These funds will be available through tuition scholarships to all

staff interested in pursuing gifted licensure.

In addition to the efforts to become state wide AIG licensed (through official add on licensure), our district will also support teachers who choose instead to meet minimum professional development criteria outlined in the LOU document. As an added incentive for Asheville City Schools staff, funds have been allocated to support local and regional professional development offerings so that course materials, substitute expenses, and registration fees will be paid for teachers to participate in appropriate offerings. Our goal is to publicize the coursework and incentives as each school year gets started to encourage the participation of 5 - 10 teachers per school, in either the add-on licensure route or meeting the local professional development criteria, over the course of this plan cycle.

To further these efforts, in the fall of 2013, the coordinators from across Region 8 have agreed to meet and work collaboratively to come to consensus about minimum competencies for our region and then work with our WRESA to design and develop courses that will be accepted as having met Region 8 Professional Development Criteria. Thus should teachers move from one district to another, the completion of these competencies would show in the teacher's professional development record.

In our district, there is also a concern regarding staff development at the secondary level. Currently, with quite a sizeable achievement gap in the secondary content area courses and the with the implementation of the IMPACT grant and 1:1 laptop initiative - the staff development for secondary teachers has quite understandably focused on either technology integration or closing the achievement gap. Since we recognize that these are meaningful and necessary initiatives, and yet recognize the growth of all learners as a critical area of need, the AIG staff will work with appropriate resource persons (Instructional Technology Facilitators, literacy and math coaches, additional certified support persons) to find ways to infuse best practices in gifted learning within the staff development offerings. Over this plan cycle (2013-16), we will explore and develop ways to increase staff development opportunities that will expose teachers to strategies for better meeting the holistic and comprehensive needs of the gifted learner which will simultaneously help to address the needs of other learners as well. To assist in doing so, we will further analyze the annual staff development survey results to determine targeted and specific areas of need for secondary staff members. Next, the AIG staff with secondary experience will put together or recommend already existing professional development that will meet the needs of this group of teachers. Finally, the AIG staff will work with the staff of coaches at the secondary level to assist with follow up training and support as the teachers move from the workshop experience towards classroom implementation. Again, this will involve some modeling and assistance with planning in utilizing gifted methodology.

In conclusion, the AIG Specialists feel the development and adoption of our LOU document will clarify for all that meeting the needs of gifted learners is an expectation for EVERYONE and the added supports approved and endorsed by the Board of Education will help to achieve the goal of increasing the number of certified staff prepared to met the needs of gifted learners.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Descriptions of staff development now available with documented participation

Professional development guidelines for various personnel (Levels of Understanding document)

Staff development planning agendas and presentation materials

Scholarship applications

Support resources provided for teachers

Other Comments: The "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document was adapted - with permission from the Gifted Program Coordinator in Onslow County Schools as a result of our "Pockets of Excellence" tour and research. Many thanks to OCS for supporting our efforts and allowing the use of this document.

Practice D

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Because of the relatively small percentage of teachers across the district (8%) who are AIG licensed, it is true that very often gifted students are placed in classrooms where the teacher has no additional training to work with gifted students. We recognize this as a major need in our district. The Advisory Board feels very strongly that before we can work towards this practice, we need to strengthen our own in-district staff development offerings and additionally, continue to develop partnerships with local colleges and universities to provide the appropriate training needed for staff across the K-12 continuum. During our last plan revision cycle, the team of AIG Specialists researched and worked to identify the minimum professional development requirements for all stakeholders and our current goal is to make those offerings available for our staff and provide fiscal resources to make this possible.

Goals: 1. Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, the AIG Department will work with school administrators to place students receiving cluster group services in classrooms with teachers pursuing or having met the AIG add-on licensure and/or local professional development criteria to better meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Description: As previously described, our Advisory Board, in conjunction with our team of AIG Specialists has worked to identify the minimum competencies and professional development expectations for all certified staff within our "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document. In the 2013-14 school year, we will be unveiling the LOU and will begin helping all staff to understand the contents related to the document as it relates to each person reaching/teaching gifted learners. During this time, we will also advertise the financial assistance available and encourage teachers and other certified support personnel to enroll in coursework and/or participate with appropriate local and regional professional development offerings. As we believe it is critical to have a clearly defined set of expectations regarding professional development needs before we can move forward with placing students in the classroom with trained staff, we will work on these efforts over the course of the 2013-14 school year.

As outlined above, our first goal in meeting this practice is understandably to increase the number of teachers trained and having met the professional development requirements or having AIG add-on licensure. To meet this goal, we are working to pull together a cohort of ten to twelve certified staff each year of the plan cycle to earn gifted licensure. The ACS Leadership team is in full support of this effort and has identified existing funds (Title II) to finance scholarships for teachers - with earning

AIG add-on licensure being only one of two priority areas in our district. In addition, over the last year, our team of specialists has worked closely with the Western Regional Education Service Alliance (WRESA) to bring staff development opportunities to our region to focus on the needs of gifted learners. Offerings in the 2012-13 school year included identification practices for gifted learners and differentiating within the common core. Our team is excited that WRESA has seen the need and is willing to continue to work with our regional coordinators to bring in additional resources and guest speakers to continue to provide this focused training (aligned nicely with our LOU document) to help certified staff meet the needs of this population.

We believe that in providing comprehensive and ongoing professional development both regionally and through the university licensure route, and further in having identified a primary source of funding to help make this a reasonable and feasible practice, we will be able to achieve our end goal of increasing the number of teachers meeting the local professional development criteria and will thereby improve the quality of response to instruction for gifted learners exponentially.

Our Advisory Board also felt it important that when teachers have earned their add-on AIG licensure or have met the competencies outlined in the LOU - that those teachers should be recognized for their efforts. We believe that being recognized by the Board of Education, in the same way we would recognize National Board Certified Teachers, would be another way to show our appreciation of staff efforts. The AIG team of specialists has also outlined other supports to keep teachers moving towards continued interest in professional development related to gifted to strengthen their classroom practice for gifted learners after completing the licensure program (or having met the local professional development criterion). These supports include but are not limited to supporting NCAGT membership or finding support to attend gifted professional development (through attending local, regional, or statewide offerings).

The second prong of this approach is then to work with school administrators to place gifted students in classrooms where teachers have completed this work. The AIG Department will work closely with the Human Resources Department to maintain accurate records of those attending coursework (whether regional or university course offerings) and then work with principals to place students appropriately, taking into consideration those who have successfully completed coursework and who demonstrate a thorough understanding and working knowledge of the competencies outlined in the LOU.

It is our expectation that this process will take one to two years, as the university coursework route is generally a one year course of study and the regional offerings will be available again beginning in the spring of 2014. Therefore, it is our goal to be able to make more appropriate placement decisions, as is the intent of this practice/ standard, no earlier than one year into the new plan cycle.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Levels of Understanding Document (outlines minimum professional development criteria for teachers and other certified support staff)

Cluster group teacher assignment caseload record (compares student placement with teacher licensure status)

Regional professional development requirements

Records of coursework completed by teacher and school

Other Comments:

As a future related practice, we will also continue to share knowledge of the Total School Cluster Grouping model with principals at all grade spans, as well as research other grouping alternatives that have a body of supportive research. As we hear from teachers quite frequently (72% reported on the most recent needs assessment survey) - meeting the range of diverse learner needs within a heterogeneous environment continues to be a struggle. One research based alternative is the deliberate "narrowing" of the range of learner levels while maintaining a heterogeneous environment. As a member of the ACS Curriculum Council, our AIG Coordinator will continue to share the resources and research based practices and models for grouping students with both school and district level leaders to help see alternatives that will benefit ALL learners and better support and meet the needs of teachers.

Practice E

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The professional development survey conducted throughout our district has identified several priority areas for our teachers. One priority area is the differentiation of instruction for gifted learners, as well as meeting the needs of a diverse range of learners within the heterogeneously grouped classroom. This training needs to be aligned with other district priorities, i.e., Language and Literacy, Math Investigations, IMPACT (technology and media resources infused into the daily classroom experience) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). As previously mentioned, as a general practice, our district curriculum and instruction team has had much dialogue about utilizing a more integrated approach to professional development, rather than offering staff development sessions in isolation.

Goals: 1. Continuing with the 2013-14 school year, in response to implementation of the common core, the AIG staff will work with instructional coaches and classroom teachers to provide resources and strategies that enrich, extend, and/or accelerate the Common Core and NC Essential Standards to meet the academic needs of gifted learners.

2. By the end of the 2013-14 school year, representatives from the AIG staff will attend Responsiveness to Instruction (Rtl) training, and train the remainder of our AIG team, in order to better use this model to meet the holistic needs of gifted learners.

3. As a result of our PLC training, the AIG Specialists will operate as a district wide PLC and will also integrate into school wide PLCs to assist grade level teams to ensure gifted learners' needs are considered in the data review, planning, and regrouping processes, beginning with the 2013-14 school year.

Description: During our recent (fall 2012) AdvancEd accreditation visit, it was noted in reviewing the new ACS strategic plan and during corresponding stakeholder interviews, that Asheville City Schools had so many professional development offerings and so many initiatives in place - that it was hard to see a clear focus or see clearly established and articulated district priorities. As a result, our district wide curriculum council (consisting of all curriculum and instruction directors) set out to more clearly define and articulate both our district's priorities - by establishing SMART goals to achieve what is critically important in our new strategic plan - and a new process for evaluating priorities in an

ongoing and consistent fashion (to determine what is working and which initiatives, if any, should be removed). At the end of the work, the following district wide priorities were established:

- Common core and state essential standards
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Responsiveness to Instruction (Rtl)
- Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS)
- Poverty/ Under-resourced Learners
- Homebase/ PowerSchool
- OLWEUS (bullying prevention framework)
- Supporting teaching and learning with instructional technologies

As the AIG staff continues to support this new direction of the ACS Board of Education, we will seek to provide additional staff development, in conjunction with other certified support staff that will enhance the instruction of all learners, with particular emphasis on the gifted population. In doing so, we have asked ourselves the following questions:

1. How do we "push in" to existing staff development?
2. How or where are we (as gifted advocates) represented within the district wide initiatives?
3. How do we help others to see the explicit connections between our work and the district wide focal areas?

As this process has begun, the AIG Specialists have been included in the district wide trainings that support the eight critical areas to first have a deeper understanding of practices and expectations of content area teachers and other support staff, but second to see the connections between the focus area and the impact on gifted learners.

For example, all the AIG Specialists and the program coordinator have participated with teams of other teachers in the "PLCs at Work" training with the DuFours. Because of our participation, we are now better able to understand what an effective/ working PLC looks like and how we can be utilized within the PLC setting to support the needs of gifted learners. In the upcoming year, one of our focal goals will be to integrate with one PLC at each school to assist with the development of pre-assessments and other formative assessments, to support the data analysis discussions, and then to provide resources to enrich and extend the curriculum as students are reaching mastery (and we ask the "what now" question for those students) and we utilize flexible instructional groups to meet the academic needs of ALL student(s). We see some "pockets of excellence" with the development of PLCs slowly spreading across the district - examples where an AIG Specialist already closely supports the PLC process and team - and our goal as a district AIG team is to replicate those successful efforts across the district.

In another instance, Rtl is a major component of our district framework for supporting student success. So far, our Coordinator has been fully trained in Rtl and 2 AIG Specialists have been designated to serve as "train the trainers" for the remainder of the AIG team. These specialists will serve on the district Rtl leadership team to guide and direct the transition from a 4-tier model to a 3-tier model. Our specialists have participated in dialogue with school psychologists and district Rtl coaching staff to further enhance understanding of the model and how it can be utilized to support gifted learners. Additionally, in our newly designed service delivery model, the Gifted Services Committee at each school will use an Rtl/problem solving approach to address the holistic needs of our Intellectually Gifted (IG) population and other gifted learners with an IDEP and those gifted

underachievers.

One of our new guiding principles to emerge from the new strategic plan is that "ACS values intellectual curiosity, academic rigor and student initiative and believe that students will thrive when high expectations are set and when students have access to enriching learning opportunities." We feel this speaks strongly to what we try to do in the Gifted Education Department and as we continue to work with teachers and other certified support staff to meet the academic needs of gifted learners, our emphasis will be on helping teachers understand and adjust the pace, rate, and rigor of instruction to better meet those learners' needs. To further support this idea, in our district's implementation of the common core, AIG Specialists have been utilized each year as a part of the district team during summer institutes and have brought back information and insight to our district team. In addition, one of our specialists worked to develop lessons for the statewide AIG Instructional Resources Project (IRP) and has brought back examples and a lesson planning format to consider and utilize as a district resource for teachers. During the 2012-13 AIG Winter Institutes, our district involved content area coaches to better understand the IRP and to assist with our sharing of common core resources and to understand how the common core - alone - is not enough for gifted learners. Those in attendance left with the realization that even as rigorous as the common core appears, for gifted learners, there is still much to be done to enrich and extend to ensure new learning occurs.

In conjunction with the common core and essential standards implementation, the AIG Specialists will continue to pay particular attention during the upcoming three year cycle, to the implementation of 21st century skills at an advanced level. Specialists will serve as researchers first, of successful research based strategies, and then will provide feedback and instruction for staff to implement these skills/tools in a quality way. For example, two of our elementary specialists currently serve on a research team investigating the best use of the iPad as instructional tools for both teachers and students. The feedback these specialists provide as they work closely with the Instructional Technology Facilitators will be an invaluable resource as our district makes critical decisions in technology implementation in the near future. Other examples include AIG Specialists working at the secondary level with utilizing both the Moodle course format (to enrich and extend the curriculum through an online delivery) and the use of Google docs to improve instruction for gifted learners, as they partner and collaborate with other students in innovative ways.

With our district wide poverty initiative, our curriculum council has focused on the work of Ruby Payne and Eric Jensen. Our AIG team has been fortunate to have one of our specialists as a lead trainer for the Eric Jensen work while our coordinator serves as a trainer for the Ruby Payne "Framework for Understanding Poverty" modules. As we move forward with this initiative, our goal is to extend the resources to allow for the study of gifted students from under-resourced backgrounds, using "Removing the Mask" (Slocumb) as a major reference.

Even as we look at the anti-bullying framework, OLWEUS, the implementation of PBIS, and the transition over to PowerSchool and Homebase, our district team is constantly questioning and trying to make explicit connections between the new initiative and the impact on gifted learners. This effort begins with our own study and understanding, but must also include the direct and explicit connections for gifted, so that our students' needs are always considered. As the new initiatives are introduced and continued, our team utilizes our team meeting format (weekly and monthly meetings) to discuss the issues and raise questions that should be brought forward to leadership.

In the end, through our involvement with the ACS Curriculum Council, our district AIG team is able to

ensure that the gifted perspective is taken into account through all district wide initiatives.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Course catalog of PD offerings
Schedule, agendas, and participation logs of Professional Development offerings (through CougarTrax reporting - and eventually the new Homebase/ PowerSchool tools)
Annual Needs Assessment survey of all certified staff

Other Comments:

Practice F

Aligns professional development opportunities with state and/or national teaching standards and best practices in gifted education, including 21st century skills and content at advanced levels.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Our district professional development has been targeted to implementation of the common core standards; which would embed 21st century skills. This will surely continue over the next plan cycle as our district becomes more proficient at implementing the Common Core and NC Essential Standards. Our department is only beginning to have targeted discussion about delivering content at advanced levels; the common core is so new that teachers are still figuring out the content and haven't tackled the differentiation of the common core.

We also believe it will be helpful, in order to align professional development opportunities with "gifted best practice", for our department to continue our dialogue about what are the essential components of gifted best practice according to current research.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: With our continued focus on the IMPACT model; bringing media and digital resources together to support instruction, it will be imperative that the AIG Specialists and AIG Coordinator work closely with the Media Technology Advisory Committee at the district level, as well as, the Instructional Technology Facilitators at each school to incorporate AIG standards and best practices as we move forward with IMPACT staff development and our 1:1 laptop initiative at the secondary level.

As other curriculum initiatives are brought on board or expanded, there is a need for the AIG Specialists to work closely with content area coaches to ensure that as they implement the new curriculum initiatives, we all work together to meet the needs of gifted learners by providing appropriately aligned professional development to support teachers.

As stated previously, as we implement the common core standards, our team of specialists will work to integrate the AIG-IRP lessons and resource materials into our framework. Also our group has revisited the use of other research based materials to support the common core implementation, like integrating Junior Great Books, Paideia seminars, and the materials from the College of William and Mary to see connections between the new state and national standards with the expectations for

gifted learners. As we continue to get training and conduct our own research, we look for alignment and seek out opportunities to share resources and methods with teachers and support staff.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

List of PD offerings

Professional development "think tank" findings and recommendations - documenting alignment with staff development in gifted practice

Other Comments:

Practice G

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Professional development opportunities are available for the AIG Specialists – we have completed book studies, researched and planned "Pockets Of Excellence" (POE) tours together, attended conferences (regional, statewide, and national) together and most importantly, have taken time to debrief together.

AIG Specialists and Advisory Board members felt there were many examples of working collaboratively together with teachers, providing professional development that is not necessarily part of our plan, but that folds us into the larger group.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: The following opportunities exist and will be expanded upon in the coming plan cycle:

At the elementary level, AIG Specialists collaborate together during weekly "E team" meeting format. With the addition of a new staff person at the elementary level, there will be a need to continue to meet on a weekly basis to help inform new staff of practices and procedures to ensure some level of consistency throughout the district. The agenda utilized incorporates time to share lesson plan materials and ideas, as well as, planning for district wide activities and events, an opportunity to share newsletter items, and to share regional and statewide news on a consistent basis. The time is also spent to analyze needs at various elementary schools and to brainstorm ideas for meeting those needs. Additionally, as the specialists attend professional development together there is always an opportunity afterwards to debrief new material learned, share ideas about reenergizing practices that may have gone unattended to, and brainstorm strategies to incorporate these ideas into a variety of settings with gifted learners; to include the regular classroom, the enrichment study groups, cluster group classrooms, the new comprehensive study group (as outlined in our service delivery plan) and so forth. Participants included in this meeting would typically be all elementary specialists, the AIG Program Coordinator, the K-2 Nurturing Specialist, and guest collaborators are present as needed.

Similarly, the middle school specialists have a weekly team meeting with the program coordinator.

While agenda items are often similar, this time together is often used to explore new service delivery options - like the online learning options now available - and provide resources to support the implementation of new services. Because our district only has one middle school, we often also look at issues related to the middle school - ie, scheduling, testing, school policies, and so forth to ensure the needs of gifted learners are being taken into consideration in theory and in practice.

The elementary and middle school specialists collaborate with classroom teachers and other certified support staff in a variety of settings, including individually, and with small groups (typically grade level or department/like groups). Additionally, on an as needed basis, there are presentations to the entire faculty. Over the last several years, there have been opportunities for the AIG Specialists to confer and collaborate with certified support staff, but generally only the literacy and math coaches. In the coming plan cycle, our goal is to expand the collaboration opportunities to include the Instructional Technology Facilitators at the school level, the AVID instructors and other "like group" resource teachers (career and technical education at the middle school, as well as other exploratory teachers K-8). Additionally, we would like to expand this collaboration to include the counselors, psychologists, social workers, and others in similar capacities, especially as we seek to incorporate an RtI problem solving approach for our new "Intellectually Gifted" (IG) population and any other gifted learners with an IDEP in place.

This collaboration would include opportunities to attend staff development regarding targeted practices and support, as well as, provide the opportunity to share and put together resources for all stakeholders. These opportunities would also expand upon the frequent collaboration with various certified support personnel like the Instructional Technology Facilitator, Media Specialist, Counselor, AIG Specialist, and with EC teachers when a student is twice exceptional.

At the high schools, with an AIG Specialist on campus only 25% of the time, opportunities for such collaboration can be harder to facilitate. Over the last 3 years, with the current model and having had consistency in personnel, the collaboration, especially with school psychologists, counselors and the Freshman Experience (FX) teachers has increased.

While there are some barriers at the high school, for example the limited time of the AIG Specialist at the secondary level, having only a small number of other certified support staff to collaborate with at the secondary level - one math coach and only one Instructional Technology Facilitator, along with the content driven nature of the high school staff - can all prove to be quite difficult as we broach the topic of integrated studies or possible differentiation; in essence, staff development exists to improve content knowledge, but few opportunities exist for the improvement of content delivery and the ability to differentiate for learners based on the explicit needs, abilities, and/or interest of students.

As we acknowledge that these obstacles exist, our AIG staff has made steady progress and has begun to address the issues by first re-establishing the high school services committee to share concerns and address the needs of the gifted learners, and secondly, by advertising and encouraging participation in existing staff development opportunities that focus on gifted learners. In so doing, some members of the team have had opportunities to better understand the needs of the gifted, and have engaged in dialogue about how to better address these needs. The participation in staff development opportunities has also led to greater dialogue about potential resources and services to be utilized with the gifted high school student. As we move into the next plan cycle, our goal is to increase the opportunities for dialogue and participation with staff development, and do so on a more

consistent and ongoing basis.

At the district level, there have been regular and consistent opportunities for the district team (D-team) to come together and share resources and research as we led the Advisory Board process to implement, monitor, and revise our plan of services. During the last plan cycle (2010 - 2013), we were able to build upon that strong foundation with regular monthly meetings to ensure that the action steps outlined in the plan were being worked on and remained at the forefront of our agenda and attention. While the Advisory Board will continue to meet only quarterly, it is our expectation that there will continue to be work done "behind the scenes" on a monthly basis to prepare for those Advisory Board work sessions, as was our pattern during this revision year. The monthly D-team meetings will follow a similar format to the more frequent "E-team" and "M-team" meetings, in terms of agenda items related to long and short term planning and sharing of both resources and materials. As well, the D-team will be responsible for implementing the professional development identified in the annual staff professional development survey.

During the 2013-14 school year, our D-team will also conduct research, as shared previously, on a third identification pathway - the work sample/ product based approach. We will conduct this research as we did other research during our POE tours, by studying statewide and research based best practices and then visiting and sharing with those experienced in such practice. The end goal is to have materials in place to pilot this pathway in 2014-15. In addition, in the upcoming year, our D-team will embark upon a new book study series - and will study "Drive" (Pink), "Fair Isn't Always Equal" (Wormeli), and "Learning by Doing" (DuFour) to further support our new components in our revised plan and to support other district wide goals and efforts towards differentiated assessments and grading practices.

We firmly believe that modeling our own self-directed learning is helpful to our students, teachers, and the families we support.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Documented meeting notes and agendas
Planning templates
Examples of resources produced through collaboration

Other Comments:

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.

Practice 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.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Historically, in Asheville City Schools, we have provided tiered services, to include Advanced Subject Grouping, Enrichment Study Group, Interest Study Group, and cluster grouping, in correlation with student eligibility data. Additionally, we have encouraged creativity, the deep and meaningful exploration of student interest, and nurturing the talents of students through a host of competitions and activities, such as Lego competitions, Math Counts, and the National Geography Bee.

In the most recent plan cycle, we worked to meet the needs of students at both ends of the continuum by providing intense K-2 nurturing (with the addition of a K-2 Nurturing Specialist on staff) and tangible services at the high school level, by providing an AIG Specialist at the high school (25%). While both of these areas were new during the 2010-13 plan revision, we have evidence from stakeholders that points to the success of these services, and therefore, both services will be expanded in the 2013-16 plan cycle.

Because we have seen much progress in these areas, we have chosen to consider this practice maintained. However, our team has many specific ideas for strengthening this practice, and those are outlined below.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: As a result of our research and visits with other districts across North Carolina, we have reformatted our identification model and service delivery plan to include a menu of service delivery components very thoughtfully and intentionally aligned to student strengths and needs. In our new service delivery plan, we have considered and planned for the deliberate incorporation of activities and services to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted learners, even creating a new service environment, the Comprehensive Study Group (CSG), to meet the population of students with potential to high ability who are not yet achieving at the same threshold. With the CSG environment and a new pathway for intellectual ability, we will incorporate an Individualized Differentiated Educational Plan (IDEP) for students and using the Responsiveness to Instruction (Rtl) approach we will monitor student progress on a quarterly basis. Thus, the specialists will be creating a plan to address each child's specific needs, as seen in the data, and will then develop appropriate social, emotional, academic and when needed, behavioral goals with intentional and ongoing follow up to determine whether or not the plan was successful.

We have re-aligned all services to match the academic and intellectual needs of all students. This intentional restructuring of service delivery options tightly aligned to the student eligibility data, we believe will result in better meeting the holistic needs of gifted learners. As a quick overview, the plan for serving gifted learners utilizes the following ideas:

To serve those students who demonstrate, at varying levels, intellectual potential or high intellectual ability, there are two services - both Intellectually Gifted (IG), for students at the 96th %ile or higher (on a nationally-normed aptitude measure) and the CSG, as mentioned briefly above, for students with aptitude of 85th %ile or higher (on a nationally-normed measure). The activities of each group have been designed to ensure that students within either of these service environments will receive the support he or she needs to succeed in academic pursuits as well as takes into consideration the student's strengths and holistic needs.

For those demonstrating academic potential or high academic performance, the Advanced Subject Group (achievement measured at the 85th %ile on a nationally-normed measure) and Cluster Group (achievement measured at the 96th %ile) opportunities are also available. For these students already performing academically, these services take place in the regular classroom with the consultation and support of the AIG Specialist.

Finally, for those students demonstrating potential both academically and intellectually, the Enrichment Study Group (those demonstrating at the 85th %ile on both a nationally-normed achievement and aptitude measure) and/or Interest Study Group (both achievement and aptitude on a nationally-normed measure at the 96th %ile) will be the appropriate service delivery environment.

To assist with these efforts, across the K-12 continuum, we see evidence of the need to involve more guidance counselors with identification and service delivery decisions. We understand and recognize that with the transition of counselors (six of eleven new since the last plan cycle), we need to provide additional training to specifically address the social, emotional, and academic needs of gifted learners.

In addition, as we continue to work to more clearly define what the services for high school students should look like, in the Spring 2014 semester the Advisory Board will randomly select AIG students from both AHS and SILSA to conduct focus group interviews with about services our high school students might want and need. This is a critical goal area for our Advisory Board, and as such, funds have been set aside in our budget and plans have begun with Western Carolina University (WCU) to partner together to get the research project underway. After hearing from students, conducting a parent survey to garner parental views, and taking into consideration evidence gathered from visits to successful high school programs across the state, the AIG department will collaborate with the high school gifted services committee to develop a slate of options to present to the Advisory Board and the Board of Education. Our ultimate goal would be to see some of the recommendations supported and funded by the Board of Education in an effort to improve learning experiences for all high school gifted learners. To further assist with these efforts, our high school specialist will be increasing service time on the high school campus to one day per week at each of the high schools.

As we are expanding the presence of the AIG Specialists in each of the elementary schools to more fully address the needs of the K-2 population, we feel there is a need to more consistently address both the issue of how students are selected to receive the K-2 nurturing service and the issue of what the experiences should look like to more fully prepare students to potentially receive gifted services

beginning in 3rd grade. To that end, our district team, led by our K-2 Nurturing Specialist, is working to clearly define and determine what K-2 nurturing "non-negotiables" should be, to make sure that all K-2 students have similar experiences in the early years. This will likely include a menu of some whole group activities (via "push in" or inclusion lessons), tapping into our Project USTARS and Paideia resources and expertise, as well as activities to be utilized with small group pullout, like the College of William and Mary and "Habits of Mind" resources utilized successfully over the last several years.

With our staff increasing by 1 full position, and our sharing that position across the K-12 continuum, we feel we will be better able to support the efforts at both the elementary and secondary levels.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Newly revised DEP, IDEP, IDEP progress monitoring form, and SER Notes and recommendations from high school student focus group, parent feedback, and corresponding services provided as a result of this research effort.
K-2 "curriculum map" to show nurturing activities students should experience

Other Comments:

Practice B

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Historically, our district has utilized the Differentiated Education Plans (DEP) and Individual Differentiated Education Plans (IDEP) to outline and provide a variety of options in the areas of reading, math, critical thinking and problem solving skills, as aligned with student eligibility data. In previous plans, Advanced Subject Grouping (ASG) was directly aligned to reading and math, through differentiation in the classroom while Cluster Grouping (CG) provided this differentiated service for those students performing at the highest academic levels. Enrichment Study Group (ESG) provided an opportunity for integrated curriculum enrichment and Interest Study Group (ISG) offered the students time to independently explore topics based on their academic interests.

In addition to the direct support to students within the learning environments outlined above, the AIG Specialists provided informal support to students on an as needed basis. This support might have included any of the following: nurturing support, counseling, tutoring support, and serving as an advocate or liaison to ensure that the needs of the student were being met by working with other service providers. Additionally, AIG Specialists have provided direct support to classroom teachers in planning and acquiring resource materials to meet the needs of the gifted learners and support teachers and students when guidance regarding acceleration and extension needs arose.

With previous plans, however, our district did not explicitly address the identification of and service delivery needs of the intellectually gifted students. Though we did identify many students considered intellectually gifted, we served all students within the ASG, ESG, CG, and ISG environments. In addition, the criterion for services was different at the elementary and middle grades, which often led to confusion and frustration for students and parents who experienced service level changes, even though the criterion used to identify the student had not changed.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, our Advisory Board and AIG staff set out to revise our service delivery model to more efficiently and seamlessly align our services with the student eligibility criterion.

With our revision of the service delivery model, the data collected on the Student Eligibility Record (SER) becomes even more critical, as the data now more clearly reveals the students' strengths and needs and aligns the new service environment to meet those strengths and needs in an explicit way. The data examined will include information regarding student achievement, student aptitude, teacher observation of the student (including observations about student motivation) and is collected on the SER for analysis in order to make appropriate service delivery match for each student. The DEP and IDEP outline the most conducive learning environment and content modifications for each student.

As we move forward with our revised service delivery model, it is important to note that the role of the AIG Specialist will remain the same (as outlined in Standard 3B). We expect that the AIG Specialists will continue to provide both direct and indirect supports to students and teachers to meet the holistic needs of gifted learners.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

Learning Environment Options provided for students in grades 3 - 8; services are determined with matching eligibility criterion in the areas of aptitude, achievement, and teacher observation of gifted characteristics. Descriptions and qualifying criteria for service delivery options:

ADVANCED SUBJECT GROUPING (ASG)

Students of above average achievement are grouped together for differentiated instruction in a specific subject area. This grouping may take place within the heterogeneous classroom or through advanced course placement. The AIG Specialist serves in a support/ coaching capacity for the regular classroom teacher(s) to provide necessary resource materials and assistance with appropriate differentiation for the extension of gifted learners.

At least three* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 85th percentile or above on a nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*One of the three criteria must be a nationally-normed standardized achievement test.

CLUSTER GROUPING (CG)

A cluster group consists of 5 - 8 highly gifted students who are placed in the same grade level class with a teacher who is trained to work with them and devotes proportional class time to differentiating for them. This grouping practice ensures that the highly gifted are grouped with intellectual peers for a significant portion of each day. An AIG Specialist serves in a support/ coaching capacity to assist the teacher(s) with finding appropriate resource materials and to assist with differentiation of the

content for the gifted learners.

At least four* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- Grade composite of A in the core subjects (reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies)
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*The criteria must include a nationally-normed standardized aptitude test, a nationally normed standardized achievement test, and a grade composite of an A in core subjects.

COMPREHENSIVE STUDY GROUP (CSG)

Students will explore a variety of activities including, but not limited to, problem-solving, affective support, organizational strategies, and enrichment activities. This service is designed specifically to respond to the needs of gifted students who are not yet at the 85th%ile in achievement but meet this criteria in aptitude. Instruction is delivered by an AIG Specialist in a self-contained (pullout) environment for a designated amount of time on a regular basis.

At least three* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 85th percentile or above on a nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*One of the three criteria must be a nationally-normed standardized aptitude test.

ENRICHMENT STUDY GROUP (ESG)

Students will be exposed to new ideas, skills, and concepts as well as going broadly and deeply into ideas already introduced in the curriculum. Students will explore universal themes and concepts. Instruction is delivered by an AIG Specialist in a self-contained (pullout) environment for a designated amount of time on a weekly basis.

At least three* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 85th percentile or above on a nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- 85th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*The criteria must include a nationally-normed standardized achievement test and a nationally-

normed standardized aptitude test

INTEREST STUDY GROUP (ISG)

Highly gifted students are given an opportunity to pursue their interests as individuals or in small groups to pursue an in-depth study with an AIG Specialist, community member, or other faculty member. In these instances, the AIG Specialist serves as a facilitator of student learning as the focus shifts to the students leading, directing, and being accountable for new learning.

At least four* of the following criteria must be present for placement:

- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized achievement test in reading and/or math
- 96th percentile or above on nationally-normed standardized aptitude or intelligence test
- Grade composite of A in the core subjects (reading/English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies)
- High Probability of Intellectual Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Academic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Creative Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Artistic Giftedness on a GRS
- High Probability of Giftedness in Leadership on a GRS
- Above average Motivation on a GRS

*The criteria must include a nationally-normed standardized aptitude test, a nationally normed standardized achievement test, and a grade composite of an A in core subjects.

For students in grades 9 - 12 we will continue to support transition efforts through the AIG Specialist reviewing four year plans with each student to appropriately match academic coursework with student performance and ability. Our AIG Specialist at the high school also teaches "Cougar Success/Survivor" courses at each high school to better meet the academic, social and emotional needs of gifted learners in the required freshman transition courses. Additionally, the specialist works with counselors and school psychologists to address both summer enrichment opportunities - like Governor's School selections, regional and statewide summer enrichment camps, internships and mentorships - and the arrangement of guest speakers to address a range of topics, to include various careers of interest, the North Carolina School of Science and Math (enrollment and application process), and others as determined by student interest and need.

While the learning environment options below will continue in the 2013-14 school year, our Advisory Board will gather input from many high school students, via a focus group, to determine services and options to add to our current slate of support. The focus group recommendations along with the research previously completed during our "Pockets of Excellence" visits to districts with firmly established high school programming, and data collected from parent surveys, will provide guidance for new service delivery options.

Until recommendations are made, the learning environment options for high school students - at both Asheville High School (AHS) and the School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville (SILSA) will remain as outlined below:

Honors Level Courses -

Honors level courses surpass the standard course of study with the use of more rigorous and language-rich supplementary materials. Faster pace of content, with greater opportunities for

curriculum compacting, advanced content, rigor and extended analytical thinking are characteristics of these classes. There is greater emphasis on student responsibility for reading and studying independently. The requirements for enrollment are listed in the high school course catalog. During the upcoming plan cycle, our district will examine the rigor and quality of our honors courses in an internal curriculum audit, to ensure we meet best practices outlined within the Honors Course Implementation Guide (DPI, 2012).

Advanced Placement (AP) courses -

AP classes (curriculum developed by the College Board) offer a pace and academic rigor equivalent to that of college level courses. Students must be motivated to work hard to master the subject matter. This requires that a student be mature enough to assume the responsibility of reasoning, analyzing, and understanding the course content. It also requires studying the course content in greater depth. The requirements for enrollment in each course are listed in the high school course catalog.

Dual Enrollment -

This option allows students to take course work at the university level while still being enrolled in high school. Students must meet the current minimum admission requirements for the University of North Carolina system (with the exception of senior English).

Students must meet two of the following criteria:

Class rank in the top 25%

Minimum GPA of 3.6

Minimum total score on the SAT of 1150

*In addition, students must have written permission of the principal, as well as, an interview with the Director of Admissions at the University level.

A-B Tech Afternoon College

Students can also earn high school and college credit during the school day by attending classes on the A-B Tech campus.

Students must meet the following criteria:

Minimum GPA of 2.5

Junior or Senior class status

For initial placements into the gifted program made during high school, three of the following criteria must be present for placement:

85th percentile or above on standardized achievement test

85th percentile or above on standardized aptitude or intelligence test

Grade of A for previous year or most recent quarter (Reading/ English and / or math)

Numerous gifted characteristics - teacher observation of a student (using approved instrument)

*One of the four criteria must be a standardized achievement or aptitude test

Planned Sources of Evidence: Data recorded on the Student Eligibility Record (SER)

Each student's Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP) outlining content and learning environment modifications

Comprehensive secondary level services as outlined by AIG students at the high school level and as recommended by the high school gifted services team

Other Comments: As our state moves forward with the new credit by demonstrated mastery practice, our district is working to establish procedures and documents that will guide teachers and administrators in making decisions to allow students to move through the curriculum at a pace and sequence that are appropriate for each individual learner. As such, we expect to have comprehensive CDM guidelines, developed in conjunction with the Director of Secondary Education and the AIG Program Coordinator, in place for students and families by January 2014.

Practice C

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

In the previous plan cycle, our goals in meeting this practice were to provide additional resources and materials for all teachers in an effort to better support differentiation in the classrooms and to evaluate at least one alternative model of serving gifted learners, in an effort to provide more inclusive service environments.

The Advisory Board has received feedback that in the 2010-13 plan cycle, opportunities and support for advancement and differentiation in the regular classroom each day were outlined in policy, there were only pockets where this was happening well in practice. Therefore, our goal is to expand this in practice on a more consistent basis for all learners across the K-12 continuum. Our team has worked to provide a differentiation checklist, developed collaboratively with the support of one of our ACS Foundation grant teams, which will be shared across the district as a part of a larger staff development initiative in the 2013-14 school year.

In response to stakeholder feedback, we have also worked over the last plan cycle to find ways to expand our services in a more inclusive manner. Our middle school specialists studied and implemented the Enrichment Cluster component of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model, with the support of regular education and elective area teachers. The success of these efforts was documented, in our collaborative grant report and it is our hope to institutionalize this practice across the middle school in the upcoming plan cycle.

There is strong evidence that the AIG Specialists and Program Coordinator work closely with other instructional departments to consider the needs of the gifted. For example, in setting the new direction for math curriculum and pacing at the middle school level, AIG Specialists were a central part of the discussion, and the needs of gifted as well as other high performing math students, were at the forefront of the discussion.

Similarly, as we begin to develop Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) across the district, we see an opportunity for more consistent input from AIG Specialists to help teachers group and regroup students based on content mastery.

Furthermore, our program coordinator does "sit at the table" for all administrative team, curriculum council, principal and assistant principal meetings, and all stakeholders are invited to attend the AIG Advisory Board meetings and planning sessions to make sure that all perspectives are studied before

making decisions regarding AIG program and services.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: In an effort to ensure that our AIG plan provides opportunities which are integral and connected to the total instructional program of the LEA in policy and practice throughout the entire district, our Advisory Board and staff will be using an integrated approach to focus on our understanding of the all, many, some, and few - as described below. In so doing, our district can help ensure that differentiation and high quality instruction for all learners - including gifted students is happening more consistently.

In "New Directions in Gifted Education," Treffinger (1989) defines gifted education as "the design of many options and alternatives that vary in kind, degree, and duration for many different students. He further suggests that schools begin to move away from thinking of a "gifted program" and begin to think of "programming for giftedness," which implies a more inclusive definition and a greater need for a range of programming options to address broader needs. This shift requires that instead of thinking about one gifted program to which all students are assigned, schools focus upon establishing an array of services, which match the needs of individual students. By establishing a wide range of program options, schools can match services to the needs of individuals. In programming for gifted learners, it is important that a full continuum of services be available that allows for the development of gifted potential in students and that addresses the needs of such special populations as gifted students with disabilities, gifted underachievers, and culturally diverse students. This continuum must also provide challenging experiences for the school system's highly gifted population.

With our newly designed service delivery options, the Advisory Board feels our system is making great strides in our effort to make this shift, and also recognizes that by making gifted programming a vital and integral part of the overall instructional program, we are improving teaching and learning for ALL students. Furthermore, we have identified new services and redefined existing services to match Treffinger's four categories of gifted learners; the all, many, some, and few.

To begin, ALL students need a challenging program that includes opportunities for them to develop their abilities, skills, and talents. It is at this developmental level of service that recognition and nurturing of gifted potential occurs. Therefore, we strive to support all teachers through our involvement with the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) team meetings, to meet a variety of student needs. As we work with teams of teachers to plan, provide common formative assessments, and then regroup children for instruction based on data - paying particular attention to the question "what do we do when the students have already mastered the material?", AIG Specialists serve as invaluable resource people, providing both print and digital resources, in addition to helping teachers understand ways to enrich and extend the curriculum for those students who show mastery of content. Another avenue to serve ALL is to provide push in/ inclusion lessons to meet the needs of a classroom of learners, modeling gifted best practices and utilizing high quality curriculum resource materials, vetted for use with high ability learners. We see this most often with our K-2 Nurturing Specialist, but also on a less formal and less consistent basis with the upper elementary and middle school specialists who provide this type of support on an as needed basis.

We further recognize that curriculum differentiation benefits MANY students, not just those identified as AIG. For that reason, MANY students have access to various components of gifted programming. One example of our newly redefined service - Advanced Subject Grouping (ASG) offers gifted

students in the classroom differentiation within a subject area of demonstrated need. In the past ASG has been a service supported by the AIG Specialist but was largely dependent upon the classroom teacher. As we move forward with this plan cycle, our team of AIG Specialists has established firm expectations around increased specialist visibility in the regular classroom environment to provide additional "push in/ inclusion" support. This change, along with other guidelines for supporting the regular classroom teacher in ASG, will change the outcomes for MANY students, not just those identified as AIG.

In other examples, because our students are not identified until 3rd grade, our K-2 Nurturing Specialist has much flexibility in determining groups that need additional support and as such can provide pull out services for MANY high flyers, beyond the "push in" services for whole class nurturing. With the small groups, we are able to use research based curriculum materials (College of William and Mary units along with Project USTARS resources) to assist with finding students exhibiting gifted behaviors. Furthermore, our involvement in planning for the new math curriculum changes to support the implementation of the common core has shifted to expand accelerating the math curriculum for all students achieving at high levels in math, and not just those identified as gifted in math. These examples of in-classroom and small group pullout services benefit MANY students, not just those formally identified as gifted.

Only SOME students who demonstrate a need for differentiation of the curriculum beyond what is offered in the regular educational program will need to be formally identified in order for their needs to be met. Both the Cluster Group (CG) students and the Interest Study Group (ISG) students are served at this level, as they clearly demonstrate this need - with an aptitude and achievement measure in the ninth stanine (96th %ile and above). These services target students who need to be grouped with intellectual peers during the day and receive purposeful and thoughtful differentiation beyond what is offered in the regular classroom. The students receiving these services often qualify and are interested in pursuing some of our acceleration options through advanced coursework, including offerings for middle school students through the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS), pursuit of early graduation or early entrance to college or perhaps even seeking out specific schooling options like the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM).

Finally, a FEW students need a totally individualized program that involves the radical acceleration of content and grade level experiences and expectations. Because of their differences, they may also require specialized counseling to help them deal with their own uniqueness. These students may include some of the students receiving CG and ISG services or these could be the Intellectually Gifted (IG) students. Some students, in particular, the intellectually gifted (IG) are those students with an extreme need for differentiation and additional services, as they have an aptitude at the 96th %ile or higher without other corroborating indicators of giftedness.

The words ALL, MANY, SOME, and FEW reflect the need for different service options for different gifted learners. No single service can address such diverse needs. Opportunities must be provided for all of these students to receive challenging and interesting educational experiences appropriate to their needs that will best prepare them for the future.

The purpose of the criteria established for identification of gifted students then, is to match the strengths and needs of the student to the service delivery options, which is reflected in each student's

Differentiated Educational Plan (DEP) or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP).

Consequently, our AIG staff, in conjunction with other staff will investigate other means of providing services to the all, many, some, and few. One effort that has garnered much support in response to recent research studies and in feeling a need to be more flexible in our services provided to gifted learners is Renzuili's School-wide Enrichment Model (SEM). Therefore, our AIG staff worked collaboratively with the Asheville City Schools Foundation (ACSF) to secure grant funding to research and pilot the SEM. In 2010-11 and 2011-12 the middle school piloted the Enrichment Cluster component of the SEM. Students and teachers were engaged in a variety of offerings to provide enrichment for ALL students in three (3) week rotations using the existing school wide enrichment and remediation time in the schedule. Data was gathered about student engagement and was studied and shared with school leaders, the ACS Foundation grant body, and the AIG Advisory Board. The data revealed a need for further training, and as a result, three AIG licensed staff were able to travel to Confratute (at the University of Connecticut) to study the model in greater depth. The data also showed much success and interest in continued implementation of the model, however, with school leadership and master schedule changes, the school was unable to use the 2012-13 year to expand our offerings. The specialists at the middle school do anticipate a move to be able to re-introduce this portion of the SEM in the upcoming school year.

Planned Sources of Evidence: PLC notes (examples of documented common formative assessments, collaboration regarding the regrouping plans, and materials provided for teachers to use with those students who have already demonstrated mastery of content).

New accelerated math criteria

Online learning checklist

Schoolwide Enrichment Model (catalog of student offerings)

Other Comments:

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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Information regarding the regulations related to gifted education, the delivery of differentiated services and instruction for AIG students, and the local AIG programming guidelines and plan are shared through a variety of media, to include, but not limited to parent meetings, grade level meetings, staff meetings, and Advisory Board meetings. As well, there is a wealth of information available to all staff via the staff intranet site and for the general public via the district website.

During our review of our plan we continue to feel that our program would benefit from the practice of institutionalizing how we share information and what information is shared, so that each staff member and all families have equitable access to information regarding gifted learners and programming to meet the needs of gifted students.

Goals:

During our summer 2013 planning sessions, the AIG team will develop a uniform plan to inform teachers, administrators, and support staff at both school and district levels, of differentiated services and instruction for gifted students, regulations related to gifted education, and the local AIG program and plan to ensure consistent and equitable access to information for all stakeholders.

Description: Beginning with posting the newly revised AIG plan on the district and individual AIG Specialists' websites, the AIG staff will begin a publicity "blitz" to share changes within the plan and the impact those changes will have on the different stakeholder groups. Currently, the information that is shared with each school staff is largely dependent upon the school administration at each site. In our district because there are very few meetings where "information is dispensed" we have been discouraged from having time on staff meeting agendas to share about the plan. Instead, AIG Specialists are encouraged to spend time at grade level, team, and/or PLC meetings to share information about the plan and services.

Because the format and venue is likely to change any given year as leadership changes, it has been determined that in the upcoming school year, the AIG staff will need to develop a uniform set of materials for each grade span that will be critical to cover at the beginning of each school year to ensure equitable and consistent access to information across the district. To this end, the AIG Program Coordinator will work with the building level administrators as a collaborative group to determine how and when to share the information with each school staff and the "plan overview" will be prepared and access to all certified personnel will be ensured. This module will contain information about the changes to the local plan of differentiated services for gifted learners, as well, as some background information about the state regulations regarding gifted education.

In terms of student information, each year all classroom teachers receive a list of identified students, their area of identification, and the services for which each student qualifies. This sharing may take place electronically to maximize the exposure of the material to as many users as possible. This information is particularly helpful as we study data trends and in determining how the student's DEP or IDEP is serving him or her throughout the schooling experience. In addition to this type of information though, the AIG staff will develop a means of keeping all certified staff informed of decisions and changes regarding the plan of serving gifted learners.

For staff, this is an easier task than for parents and other outside stakeholders since at this time, we do not have an AIG email distribution list for other district stakeholders. While AIG Specialists often have individual school lists to share electronic newsletters and other general information via email with families, there are not ways as easily maintained and identified for other stakeholders at this time.

Our program coordinator also spends time at principal meetings, curriculum council and other leadership team meetings to share current information regarding gifted programming with relevant stakeholders. It is also the responsibility of our program coordinator to put the overview materials on the website, as well as other items the team deems appropriate, to ensure that individuals have continuous access to the information regarding the new plan as it is needed. In doing so, and through the use of consistent materials the AIG staff will ensure equitable access to information

regarding effective programming for gifted learners.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Overview materials developed and presented to classroom teachers and other certified support staff.

Enhanced website presence - to add information that will be necessary for teachers and other certified support staff to stay abreast of issues regarding gifted education.

Other materials developed to share information with staff - newsletters, blog, etc

Agendas and minutes from staff development/training modules

Other Comments:

Practice E

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

In considering this practice, the Advisory Board recognizes the efforts made by the specialists, since the last plan cycle to more effectively communicate with parents and students about programming and service options, especially at key transition points. During this transition time, we have conducted transition visits, where specialists from the middle school visit the elementary sites, and the high school specialist visits the middle school to communicate with students about the transition; these visits are in addition to the general visits for all students making grade span transitions. We have also increased the number and intentional focus of parent nights to share with parents the expectations at the next grade span.

At the same time, this type of concentrated effort regarding improved communication has not happened with teachers and administrators at that same junction; 5-6 and 8-9 except in small pockets. Because we have introduced new tools in assisting with identifying gifted students in the most recent plan revision, like the Gifted Rating Scales (GRS) and new assessments (the Stanford and OLSAT) and have relied on 2nd and 3rd grade teachers to get the identification process started, we have seen some "pockets of excellence" with our communication between these grade level teachers and the AIG staff. Likewise, we also communicated well with 5th grade teachers, specifically regarding our use of the GRS; as we have utilized the data collected from the GRS as a piece of re-evaluation information for students making the transition to 6th grade, and this information can potentially impact a students' services in the 6-8 grade span. Outside of these grade spans, the increased communication among and between teachers and schools has not been consistently present across the district.

The AIG staff also sees as an area for growth the communication directly to teachers and staff regarding programming in general. While our plan has always consisted of some form of annual updates/ notification of services to teachers in schools, the information shared with each school staff is largely dependent upon the time the school administration will give to the AIG Specialists to present and varies widely from one school to the next. In this plan cycle, we would like to see this more consistently implemented as well.

Within Asheville City Schools, AIG Specialists at each site also maintain electronic databases regarding student eligibility criterion and matching services for each year; thus easing the facilitation of transition meetings which occur across the district and grade levels. As students transition into Asheville City Schools from other local education agencies, AIG Specialists have relied on NC Wise (and will now move to PowerSchool) to assist with this effort to minimize any break in services to gifted learners due to transition. Currently, school wide data managers work closely with AIG staff to advise when they have been made aware of the presence of incoming students identified as gifted from other districts.

As one means of communication among and between teachers and schools, our Gifted Services Committees at each school are usually made up of one teacher along with other stakeholders and information is often shared first with the services committee of each school. Additionally, our AIG Advisory Board (AB) consists of members from all stakeholder groups and our AB meeting time is largely spent focusing on issues, data, and trends facing our district and/or individual schools at the time, and so there is a timely exchange of information with this group of stakeholders as well.

While there are many instances where there is clear evidence of this practice, we feel that because we have specific outlined goals and clear action steps to improve in this practice, we must be focused on this area.

Goals:

1. Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, the Gifted Services Committees at each school will meet on a quarterly basis to review and modify goals and interventions for students with an IDEP and prepare for students transitioning to the next grade span, in an effort to ensure an effective continuation of K-12 services.
2. In Fall 2013, the AIG Specialists will merge all site databases into one secure document to ensure consistency, open access, and effective communication to continue services for gifted learners.

Description:

One of our internal goals is to make student data regarding student eligibility, screening, and identification information more consistent and easily accessible between the specialists. The AIG staff currently has in place "in house" databases to track students and services each year. These databases though are site specific, and contain information for those identified students only. As a result, there are two issues that have come to the surface as of late with this process. First, there has not been a way thus far to openly share the information with other specialists within the district, until we transfer the files at a transition point; transferring both hard copy files and the electronic file. Second, to date, the AIG staff has not had a consistent way to track students as they are in the screening process.

We recognize that for many reasons, there is often transition of students between our schools. When students transfer within district while in the screening process, there have been cases of students "falling through the cracks," as there is not a clear record of the process having been started, unless a decision has been made for the student and is documented in his or her file (with a Student Eligibility Record and Differentiated Education Plan or Individualized Differentiated Education Plan having been created).

We therefore see a need for a district wide database that is openly shared and easily accessible, in an effort to maximize our effectiveness, while providing secure access to the information contained therein for all AIG staff, on an as needed basis. The AIG Program Coordinator will provide support to ensure consistency in databases by making sure those databases maintained at the school level are formatted in the same manner with the same information per student entered and that periodically throughout each year, information will be merged into one secure file to support the transition of students at transition points; between grade spans and during other moves within the district.

Additional efforts to support communication at various transition points include the transition meetings at the end of each year to accomplish the following:

- *To gather necessary hard copy files and electronic database for each school's outgoing students (those making the transition to middle school or high school)
- *Special concerns are shared between the specialists regarding particular student needs and interests in determining appropriate service delivery match or to facilitate most conducive classroom placements

In addition, because we have redesigned our service delivery options and now will have many students on an Individualized Differentiated Education Plan (IDEP), we have also restructured the 5th to 6th grade transition so that middle school specialists will also meet with each elementary gifted services committee to review files for transitioning students, to better understand specific student needs and to facilitate appropriate placement into middle school service options.

Similarly, the middle school specialist(s) meets with the high school specialist to pass on both the hard copy AIG files and the electronic database to ensure consistency among data interpretation, selection of appropriate service delivery options, and to better understand the individual students making the transition.

During these 8th to 9th transition meetings in particular, beginning with the spring 2014 term, we plan to review and incorporate the survey data gathered from the students, regarding services they feel would be helpful for their success at the next grade level and overall perceptions of need as they transition to the next grade span. Additionally, our secondary specialists have brainstormed ways to increase the visibility of the high school specialist with the 8th grade students to better facilitate a smooth transition to the high school.

The transition meetings are also a time to share information about students that have become inactive - because they have relocated or share about students who have previously left the school system and are possibly re-entering. This helps us to ensure that as students move back and forth (in and out of district) they are not "lost" in the shuffle and we are able to continue services as soon as possible should the student(s) return to our district.

We believe that having this intentional focus within the transition meetings and having a tool to track students, both identified and within the screening process, with the new secure district wide database will help us to ensure that an effective continuation of K-12 services occurs for our students.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Individual school databases - electronic and/or paper version
Student AIG survey data
Consistent online databases and merged district database
Transition meeting minutes

Other Comments:

Practice 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Based on stakeholder feedback to the Advisory Board, there is a need to integrate professional development opportunities for certified teaching staff. As shared in standards 2 and 3, there is a definite need to show how differentiation can be utilized in the classroom, as teachers are learning new methodology; rather than as an aside or add on set of skills and knowledge. Therefore, this plan for serving gifted learners strongly encourages and seeks out opportunities for collaboration among and between all certified staff.

- Goals:**
1. Beginning in the fall of 2013, AIG Specialists will formally meet with PLC groups (as determined by need - see Standard 1 and 2) to develop appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction, in order to meet the needs of gifted learners.
 2. Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, the AIG Services Committee will utilize the RtI problem solving approach with the support of administrators, other specialists, teachers, and families to better meet the needs of under-achieving, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional students.

Description:

In the last several years, the AIG program has made great strides to working with classroom teachers and other certified support staff to ensure that the needs of gifted learners are met.

During the 2010 - 13 plan cycle, for example, the team of elementary specialists worked closely with the literacy coaches to develop staff development sessions specific to our district wide balanced literacy approach, and similarly worked with the math coaches to design staff development to assist with differentiation of our integrated and more inquiry based math curriculum ("Math Investigations"). In the upcoming plan cycle, the team will build upon prior collaborative efforts with district wide literacy, math, and science coaches to assist classroom teachers with the implementation of various district wide initiatives, in an effort to help classroom teachers to better recognize and meet the needs of all learners.

At the secondary level, our specialists reserve a portion of each week to work in a coaching capacity with teachers – to help design and implement lessons that are appropriately differentiated for gifted learners. A portion of the specialists' time is also spent working with the literacy and math coach at the middle and high school level to understand school level initiatives that impact gifted learners. In this plan cycle, the AIG Specialists will continue efforts to collaborate with other specialists, like the Instructional Technology Facilitators, Media Coordinators, counselors, social workers, school psychologists and others to meet the needs of gifted learners. This may be accomplished by

collaborating to provide professional development, dialogue during PLC meetings, or may take place in Gifted Services Committee meetings as questions are asked or students' needs are being discussed, in order to create a plan to meet students' needs.

One concern that has come up in our district through the strategic planning data gathering process, was the need to support teachers in differentiating instruction for all learners as we seek to implement true Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). Our goal is to fold into PLCs at each school site to provide support for teachers in designing pre-assessments, planning lessons that are rigorous and relevant for high ability learners, developing common formative assessments to check for understanding, and finally in analyzing data to appropriately respond to assessment data with differentiated instruction and resource materials.

One avenue of supporting this district wide effort further involves the AIG staff working within the structure of an ACS Foundation sponsored grant team studying differentiation practices, grading, and assessing to provide the following:

- *specific professional development for teachers using the work of Wormeli ("Fair isn't Always Equal)
- *sharing resources developed for the staff, to include a differentiation checklist - to assist teachers in planning appropriately challenging lessons and materials for gifted learners
- *specific training for school based administrative personnel to better recognize and support exemplary differentiation in the classrooms.

As another means of addressing this concern of understanding how to differentiate, is to have our AIG Program Coordinator continue to work with other district wide curriculum and instruction directors (our ACS Curriculum Council) to integrate differentiation into a district wide planning tool. This would provide district consistency in language and expectations, as well as provide resources and support for such a practice. The curriculum council will work to provide these resources and share them in a variety of formats to ensure equitable access and distribution among the teachers and schools.

Due to the redesign of our service delivery model, AIG Specialists will have an increased presence in the regular classroom to more fully support "inclusion efforts" and differentiation of the curriculum. This will also impact our gifted services committees in that they will operate as an Rtl problem solving team. As many students will have an IDEP or will have a more unique service delivery environment via Comprehensive Study Group (CSG), time each quarter will be spent as a Gifted Service Committee, trying to determine best approaches to meeting the needs of gifted learners, with the feedback of both students and parents. The outcomes of the services committee meetings, and IDEP/ DEP information will be shared among all relevant stakeholders.

We believe the transition efforts outlined throughout standard four and the intentional collaboration with other certified staff will help us provide quality differentiated programming and services throughout the K-12 continuum to better support meeting the needs of our gifted learners.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Agendas, minutes from collaboration meetings - to include PLC meetings and coaching support meetings

Staff intranet site - shared materials that have been posted after being developed during collaborative planning sessions (can also include other staff sharing platforms - i.e., Moodle, Google Docs, and so forth)

Other Comments:

Practice 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

As with many practices, the AIG Advisory Board received feedback from stakeholders that shared this practice was not necessarily found across the K-12 continuum; rather pockets of excellence at some levels and not found at all in others.

In previous plan cycles, there has not been a specific plan that addressed the social and emotional needs of gifted students across the district and there was a general lack of consistency with intentional programs, services, or lessons to meet the social and emotional needs - even within the gifted classrooms.

While we are quick to involve the counselors and other staff, as concerns are noted, there has not been a formal system in place to proactively address the social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

We therefore recognize the need to provide ongoing PD for counselors and others to address the social and emotional needs of our learners.

- Goals:**
1. Beginning in the fall of 2013 and continuing through this plan cycle, AIG Specialists and other appropriate personnel will provide on-going PD as outlined in our Levels of Understanding document for counselors, teachers, and families to address the social and emotional needs of AIG students.
 2. Beginning in the fall of 2013 and on-going, AIG Specialists will design a systematic approach to informing parents of available resources (sessions on perfectionism, supplemental experiences, etc.) through Parent University nights and categorize/inventory our resource lending library to assist families in addressing the social and emotional needs of their gifted student(s).

Description: Currently, there are several methods of obtaining data that helps AIG staff better understand the affective needs of gifted learners (as identified by the gifted learner and/or his or her family). These methods include, the use of AIG student survey data, AIG parent survey data, and various other district wide surveys and instruments which will be evaluated to determine if social and emotional needs are reported on by various stakeholders. In response to the data, AIG Specialists will spend time during parent meetings, open house activities, Parent University workshops, newsletters, and individual conferences sharing professional journal articles and other resources to raise parental awareness of the special affective needs of the gifted child.

Because we believe that parents should be partners in the educational development of their child(ren), we will seek out formal two way communication opportunities to both find out and then strive to meet the needs and concerns of parents. We began this effort when during the 2010-13 plan cycle, our staff experimented with the Parent University model. Based on the feedback and success

during that session, we will expand this effort to include annual parent university offerings, with sessions targeted at meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Also, the AIG department has invested in resources to share with parents, families, and staff, in order to develop a lending/resource library with materials appropriate to parents and other stakeholders. As such, our AIG staff will make intentional efforts to market and make the resources more easily accessible and available to all stakeholders.

Our Advisory Board feels very strongly that the social and emotional development of gifted students must be supported through a variety of services including contact with the school counselor and integration of social and emotional content within the AIG curriculum. To that end, we have thoughtfully redesigned our services to ensure that we are better meeting the holistic needs of gifted learners. One example, the creation of our Comprehensive Study Group (CSG) service environment has been developed to meet the needs of those students with high potential in the intellectual area who are not yet achieving. We understand that there may be some unmet social and emotional needs impeding the academic achievement of these students and likewise the achievement of many intellectually gifted students, and as such, our specialists are putting together specific resources and supports to meet these needs. To that end, AIG Specialists will also research and participate in professional learning opportunities to better prepare to meet the needs of those IG students, as well as those within the CSG environment.

Additionally, AIG Specialists will work more proactively and collaboratively with student support personnel (social workers, psychologists, counselors, mental health care professionals) in order to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted learners. For example, AIG Specialists will seek out professional development opportunities for personnel working with gifted students that specifically addresses developing an awareness of the social and emotional needs of the gifted learner, the diverse learner, and the under-achiever. The needs will be addressed at minimum on an annual basis during faculty meetings or other such training sessions. One particular topic of interest is to build upon the highly successful Niehart "perfectionism" training sponsored by the AIG departments of both Asheville City Schools and Buncombe County Schools several years ago and provide a refresher for counselors in this area, as there has been considerable turnover in the counseling department since the date of initial training.

Moreover, the AIG Specialists will work in conjunction with counselors and administrators to assist with the intentional placement of students with teachers who are trained and/or observed to be able to meet the social and emotional needs, as well as the academic needs, of gifted students. AIG Specialists will also work with counselors to ensure that career counseling becomes a part of the gifted student's curriculum at each grade level through events such as career day, job shadowing, transition and mentoring programs.

Another avenue to ensure collaboration regarding the social and emotional needs of gifted learners will be seen in our district's implementation of the "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document. As mentioned previously in standard three, our department has developed the LOU document to outline the minimum competencies expected for all certified staff serving gifted students. To support the realization of this goal, AIG Specialists will provide targeted professional development for various groups of stakeholders in a systematic way. During the 2013-14 school year, the team of specialists will more formally create a plan of providing training over the course of the next three years in a variety of formats - not to overlook the existing structures to help support the process. For example, using the monthly counselor meetings or encouraging attendance at trainings hosted at the Western

Regional Educational Service Alliance (WRESA), in conjunction with the other regional coordinators.

These efforts to support training for staff, provide resources for staff and families, and responding to parent needs will assist our efforts to ensure collaboration aimed at the goal of thoughtfully and intentionally meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Professional development documentation (collaborative across role groups to support gifted).

Resource library lending logs

Survey instruments and documentation

Other Comments:

Practice 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Over the last five to seven years, with transition in leadership at both the school and district administrative level, the processes once utilized to provide opportunities for cross-grade subject grouping and other means of accelerating instruction have become less common place; as such, we recognize this as a definite need then to develop and clearly articulate appropriate acceleration options.

There are several examples of clearly defined acceleration options available, i.e., math acceleration and online learning, both available at the middle school, and the use of the Iowa Acceleration scales for determining appropriate types of acceleration when requests arise. On the other hand, decisions around subject acceleration are much less formal, typically site based case by case situations involving the teachers, parents, administrators, and the AIG Specialists.

With the lack of formally identified processes and criterion, and implementation of the new state board policy regarding acceleration (credit by demonstrated mastery) on the horizon, our Advisory Board and Board of Education see a need to more clearly articulate the acceleration options and provide clear guidelines to include a district appeals process during this plan cycle.

Goals: 1. The site-based Gifted Services Committees will utilize online learning checklist to assess accelerative instructional and placement options when NCVPS is appropriate beginning in the 2013-2014 school-year and ongoing.

2. By June of 2014, the AIG District Team will have developed, with district curriculum council, guidelines and best practices for Credit by Demonstrated Mastery to meet the needs of individual

gifted learners.

3. By June of 2014, the AIG District Team will have developed guidelines and best practices for the use of Iowa Acceleration Scales to meet the needs of individual gifted learners.

Description:

As shared previously, there are several examples of clearly defined guidelines, processes, and criterion to make acceleration decisions. One such example surfaced over the course of the 2012-13 school year, as our middle school specialists joined an ad hoc "Math Think Tank" to help determine what the requirements would be for middle school students to compact and accelerate through the math curriculum. This group also consisted of math teachers at the middle and high schools, along with secondary administrators, counselors, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) staff, the secondary math and literacy coaches, and the Director of Secondary Education. The goals for the group included looking closely at the new integrated math curriculum (as our district made the transition from the traditional math sequence to the Math I, II, III approach), then determining an appropriate sequence of math instruction for accelerated learners, and finally developing a curriculum map for acceleration developed to ensure consistency of implementation and equity in access to accelerated options. The goal of the AIG Specialists moving forward, with regards to math acceleration, is to monitor implementation to ensure that those students identified as Academically Gifted in math, as well as those high ability math learners, have access to the accelerated options as the students' needs indicate appropriate.

In a similar fashion, our middle school team piloted a new online learning program through the North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) to offer accelerated course options for those middle school students who need an opportunity to accelerate at this pace, and also for those with intense interests ready to pursue further study in an area. Our team involved stakeholders across the 6 - 12 continuum at both the school and district level. The team researched the online learning options (what courses were available and how decisions for allowing middle school students to take online learning options were made) being implemented in other districts across the state at the middle school level and then studied the tools that were being used to help inform online learning options. During this research phase, an online learning checklist from New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) was shared with our team. With permission from NHCS, our team adapted the checklist to fit our needs and to help shape our guidelines for online learning at the middle school. This approach was implemented and piloted in the 2012-13 school year, and having studying the data regarding the success of the implementation, is being put into practice for the upcoming 2013-16 plan for serving gifted learners.

With each of the processes outlined above, our district found success for students in utilizing a team approach. Therefore, our goal as a district is to utilize this same approach to put together guidelines and protocols regarding our district's Credit by Demonstrated Mastery policy. As we are already in discussions with the Director of Secondary Education about what the guidelines need to look like in Asheville City Schools, based on our population and demographics, our next steps include putting together a team of stakeholders to thoroughly study the policy and then utilizing the support materials distributed by NCDPI to guide our recommendations to present to the ACS Board of Education. As we have seen the number of cases of students interested in advancing through coursework, rise over the last three years, we know that this policy will make a huge impact on our district and we believe clearly articulated processes and goals, with regards to the body of evidence indicating mastery, will be critical to our district's success with this effort.

In the larger or broader sense, our team of AIG Specialists are often asked to consult when parents and/or teachers bring forward a student performing at such an advanced level, it is thought that grade skipping might be the most appropriate course of action for him or her. While the request generally applies or originates in elementary school, there have also been many cases of these types of requests in middle school. When the questions arise, we point to the research based tools we have on hand, like the Iowa Acceleration Scales, that are particularly helpful in making acceleration decisions. However, because of heavy staff turnover in the last few years, there are few who truly understand the materials and feel comfortable and confident using the tools. Therefore, the AIG staff will provide the following to all certified staff, at the beginning of each year:

- Information about the protocols within the AIG plan regarding acceleration options, alternatives, and the tools used to provide guidance in making acceleration decisions.
- General staff development to target the lack of understanding about which acceleration options are available and the benefits of various acceleration options (flexible grouping, grade skipping, subject acceleration, and additional strategies for highly gifted) - and how to utilize the instruments available to make sound decisions regarding acceleration. While the AIG staff will work to put together consistent information to be shared with all schools, there will be much flexibility to determine the most appropriate format to use at each school.

Ultimately, it is the goal of the AIG staff to assist staff with making the most appropriate placement decisions for students on a case by case basis, as determined by a body of evidence documenting student needs. We understand that this will involve developing and selecting assessment tools to monitor progress of students to determine the level of acceleration each student needs to ensure success within these options. To that end, the AIG staff will work with school psychologists to provide appropriate assessments and tools for our Gifted Services Committees at each school to utilize when making decisions regarding student acceleration and will provide appropriate support to utilize the materials with fidelity and confidence. In addition, the AIG staff will work closely with the teams of individuals responsible for making these acceleration decisions. At the school level, this team includes administrators, counselors, teachers, and often either or both the school psychologists and AIG Specialist assigned to the school.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Use of appropriate acceleration measures
IDEP and DEP documentation
Credit by Demonstrated Mastery guidelines (local decision)
Online learning checklist

Other Comments: It is the goal of the AIG staff to provide support and guidance regarding acceleration options for students, keeping the needs and best interests of the students in mind. It is our understanding however that final placement decisions are both the right and responsibility of the school principal. So, it will be the role of the AIG Program Coordinator to clearly articulate the role and responsibility of the AIG Specialists as facilitators of the process - providing the tools and guidance through the decision making effort. To further assist parents through this process, the AIG staff will make efforts to make information regarding acceleration available to all during the school year on the website and in other promotional materials.

Also, for those very young students whose families wish to begin schooling early - early admittance to Kindergarten - it has been the policy of the Asheville City Schools district to rely and depend on the

expertise of the Director of Elementary Education to make those official placement decisions. The Director of Elementary Education uses information from district approved diagnostic assessments, the expertise of school psychologists, counselors, school social workers, and others on an as needed basis. In the case where a student is admitted to Kindergarten early, the school based administrator makes placement decisions and works closely with the AIG Specialist to ensure that differentiation of the curriculum is a priority for the student, and the specialist additionally works with the classroom teacher to provide necessary resources for the classroom teacher with the assistance and support of our K-2 Nurturing Specialist.

Practice I

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: At this time, the Advisory Board has received feedback from stakeholders that while we have intently focused on culturally/ethnically diverse, English language learners, and the economically disadvantaged students, as aligned with other district wide priorities, there is a definite need to pay particular attention to both the highly gifted and twice exceptional learners as well. Our efforts have resulted in a significant proportion of AIG identified students in our district; we currently have approximately 24% of our student population identified on our headcount. Our goal therefore is to continue to aggressively seek out ways to find and nurture talent in our underrepresented populations while simultaneously working to more intentionally and appropriately serve this group and focus attention on the twice exceptional and highly gifted learners.

Goals: Over the course of this plan cycle, we will study the student achievement and growth data to assess whether we are meeting the needs of each sub-group of gifted students through the newly revised service delivery model.

Description: As we identify gifted learners from traditionally underserved populations, the AIG staff will help to guide the gifted services committees at each school to make careful placement decisions that will meet comprehensive needs in appropriate and intentional ways. This careful attention to service delivery will match services with documented needs of the learner and will better serve the student.

For our youngest students, we will continue to incorporate Project USTARS and the use of the TOPS forms/ Harrison Observation Scales to look at students differently to identify possible gifts and talents, in addition to the traditional approach. Across the 3-8 grade spans, we will also continue to use the Gifted Rating Scales to look for students with other gifted characteristics, such as creativity and leadership. This inclusion of non traditional data points, helps to find students who are often underserved, and also builds a body of evidence to better match student needs to appropriate services.

In our new service delivery model, we have identified a new setting/ service, the Comprehensive Study Group (CSG), for those students with high aptitude who are not yet performing or achieving at high levels. Our data suggests that these students primarily represent traditionally underserved

populations. As the 2013-14 school year begins, the AIG Department will work diligently to find strategies and materials to support these students, building upon individual strengths but also providing organizational and structural support, like those found within the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) curriculum widely used at our middle and high schools. To further support this group of students, the AIG staff seeks to partner with service providers from the educational community, as well as, other community organizations to enrich and extend opportunities for underserved populations. For example, our partnership with the University of North Carolina at Asheville (UNCA), to promote and intentionally target and recruit students to attend the Super Saturday program, which provides six week enrichment sessions, based on student interest, on the UNCA campus.

Another avenue of strengthening our intentional service to one sub group of our traditionally underserved populations is to integrate our efforts with the district wide focus on poverty. To date, our district has made extensive efforts to study the general work of Eric Jensen and also Ruby Payne, with regards to students of poverty. To extend that effort, our AIG Specialists have put together a specific proposal to move towards the study to gifted students from poverty, tapping in to resources like "Removing the Mask" as a book study approach.

In addition to providing poverty professional development connected to giftedness, there is also a need to improve collaboration among and between AIG Specialists and the Advanced Placement teachers to provide rigorous instruction for highly gifted learners; working towards collaborative planning with AIG Specialist and regular classroom teachers. Currently, there is no professional development for AP teachers outside of the content area expertise. Our goal is to encourage professional development participation with AP teachers to extend their understanding of gifted learners to better meet the holistic needs of highly gifted learners.

Our district has for a long time offered cluster grouping (CG) and Interest Study Group (ISG) for highly gifted learners. In the 2010-13 plan cycle however, at the secondary level, this service became much more tangible as we began to utilize school-wide enrichment and remediation time built into the school schedule to intentionally provide additional time and services for ISG students. One example of an offering included piloting the Enrichment Cluster component of the Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) for middle school students. While this was a true school-wide effort, our ISG students were the beneficiaries of additional targeted time to pursue areas of intense interest. Another example of the use of this time is now an opportunity to pursue online learning opportunities. As shared previously, our middle school team studied other districts' implementation models and found a tool from New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) that really helped our team to shape a pilot for highly gifted students demonstrating a need for either acceleration (in academic disciplines) or an opportunity to pursue deep interests (like journalism, foreign languages, and other interest based options). Because of the success of the pilot program, our adapted online learning checklist will help us to continue to expand our options for service delivery with highly gifted middle school students.

In an effort to reach the twice exceptional populations, we will continue to collaborate with the Exceptional Children (EC) teachers and case managers, ensuring that the AIG Specialist is present at student IEP meetings and can support the goals developed during that time. Our specialists also anticipate that because a number of twice exceptional students will qualify, in our new service delivery model, for either the intellectually gifted (IG) or the Comprehensive Study Group (CSG) services, there will be IDEPs created for the students including quarterly monitoring of the students' progress towards his or her goals.

We believe this intentional focus and monitoring will strengthen our efforts to reach all of the underserved populations and we further have plans to closely examine student achievement and growth data for each subgroup of gifted student to determine if the efforts and our new service delivery model are serving us well.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Student data and trends - participation and performance of underserved populations in our program as well as the twice exceptional and highly gifted learner.

Numbers of IDEPs created for students from underserved and twice exceptional populations

Looking at the initial service delivery plans for students and changes in services at transition times to better understand what appears to be the "retention" of students.

Other Comments:

Practice J

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Stakeholder feedback suggests that the Asheville City Schools' AIG program has experienced great success in partnering with local institutions. Some examples include the following:

- *Our collaboration with UNCA, through the Super Saturday and Super Summer programs
- *Our involvement of guest speakers from the community during lunchtime learning and literacy groups
- *Partnerships to provide Math Counts, the National Junior Forensics League (debate team), Lego Teams at both the elementary and middle school level, the Geography Bee, Battle of the Books, and other American Mathematics competitions (grades 8,10, and 12)
- *Partnerships to provide service learning opportunities with National Junior Honor Society students
- *Partnership with the Kiwanis to provide spelling competitions

We further work with school psychologists and counselors to manage Governor's School nominations, both advertising the opportunity and supporting students through the nomination process. Similarly, AIG Specialists provide information and support to students regarding Duke TIP, People to People nominations, and encourage participation with after school enrichment opportunities at each elementary school and the In Real Life (IRL) program at the middle school. Finally, the specialists provide a list of summer opportunities and camps for gifted learners, via newsletters (hard copies and electronic copies) shared with parents and families.

With all that we are currently doing, we believe this to be a maintained area for our team as stakeholder feedback also suggests is true. In the meantime, we understand that there are always ways to improve these efforts and we will seek out opportunities to strengthen our efforts in the upcoming plan cycle.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: Over the past decade, Asheville City Schools has enjoyed quite a partnership with the University of North Carolina at Asheville, as the Super Saturday and Super Summer programs have emerged. While we work with the university to encourage students to participate, our AIG staff has often taken a much more active role, in presenting and teaching to both students and staff over the years. During the last plan cycle, we extended this collaborative partnership to host a "Discovery Day at UNCA" for Asheville High and SILSA students; structured similarly to a Super Summer experience. The students were able to spend the day on campus focusing on a variety of future planning activities. While the programs have experienced much success, the team of specialists, along with the Advisory Board, is also looking for ways to strengthen this partnership to encourage greater participation from a diverse collection of students, and to continue to add components to the high school program.

We also work with the following other organizations to provide experiences for our students outside of the regular academic school day, by making students aware of these opportunities and attempting to facilitate the active participation of our Asheville City Schools gifted students:

*Duke TIP – We have over a number of years encouraged students to participate in this nationally recognized program that encourages students to take national aptitude tests early and provides experiences on campus as a result of those efforts. As a result of successful completion with Duke TIP courses, we often are able to gather further evidence of student interest and ability to be used in serving students in our program.

The City of Asheville Youth Leadership Academy (CAYLA) is a summer program for high school students to experience leadership with our city officials, and is targeted at our underrepresented population.

"Mission Possible", is an Asheville trademark program for high school students wishing to enter the medical profession with our very own Mission Hospital system.

Advancement Via Individual Determination– the AVID program is a national college access initiative that targets first generation college students, to assist with their organization and college planning. Asheville Middle School was a national AVID demonstration site for a number of years, and as we assess the needs of some of our gifted learners, we find that there is a natural support network and avenue to meet the unique needs of our students in utilizing AVID strategies.

As there are many other opportunities outside of this brief list referenced above, our AIG Specialists search to provide a thorough and comprehensive listing of extracurricular activities (summer and after school enrichment options) that will meet the needs of gifted learners. This list is published via individual AIG Specialists' websites and in newsletter articles each year as students prepare for summer or other periods of academic lull. Often these resources are accessed by national organizations that support the comprehensive needs of gifted learners – and then passed along to the gifted families we serve.

As outlined in standard five, there are many additional opportunities that our Advisory Board is set to explore via new partnerships with local and statewide organizations to provide access for new and

exciting ventures for our gifted learners across the K-12 continuum.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Event brochures and materials distributed to gifted learners in ACS
Website listing of summer opportunities available to gifted learners

Other Comments:

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.

Practice A

Develops partnerships with parents/families and the community that are intentional and meaningful to support the academic, intellectual, social and emotional needs of AIG students.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Stakeholder feedback throughout the plan cycle indicates that AIG Specialists provide clear and concise information to parents and other stakeholder groups in several ways – parent meetings, websites, email lists (to foster two-way communication), newsletters, the AIG plan (posted on several websites), Advisory Board meetings, Board of Education meeting presentation(s), and site based service committee meetings.

During the previous plan cycle, the AIG Specialists worked hard to involve community partners with our programming efforts, writing grants to bring in a variety of community and parental support personnel.

While we are excited about the strides we have made during the last plan cycle, we realize there is still plenty of room for growth in this area, especially in specific partnerships with parents. During this plan cycle we hope to engage in a book study for parents and/or re-energize our efforts to create new partnership avenues. Stakeholders continue to share that there is an interest in the development of more community based partnerships to help better meet the needs of AIG students; the creation of mentorship programs and community outreach opportunities were among those specifically mentioned.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

Each year, our AIG Specialists actively seek out grant opportunities, including partnerships with the ACS Foundation and other local community partners to enhance the opportunities provided at elementary, middle, and high school levels. Such grants include bringing in resident artists (through the Teaching Artists Presenting in Asheville Schools program with the Asheville City Schools Foundation) and personnel from other community organizations such as Riverlink, Hands on Asheville, and Rotary club and Kiwanis to spotlight project based and service learning experiences and opportunities.

In the 2010-13 plan cycle, some examples of community partnerships have included: representatives from Hands on Asheville speaking to the 9th grade AIG students about volunteer opportunities for high school students, a high school senior who worked through the Rotary Club to study abroad, spoke to the 9th grade AIG students to encourage studying abroad, and through an Asheville City Schools' Foundation grant, we were able to secure the funds to purchase the equipment needed in

order to start a Trout in the Classroom program at Asheville Middle School.

Students at the elementary level had many learning opportunities including working with climatologists from NOAA, working with RiverLink, and a visit from local oceanic law expert who presented to classes in conjunction with environmental studies. School based student governments have worked with Brother Wolf, the Asheville Humane Society, Soles 4 Souls, and Hospice for community service projects. TAPAS grants received from ACS Foundation provided opportunities for 5th grade students to have a local artist teach them African American history and culture through hip hop dance, to work with an artist in learning about West African drumming and dance, and to learn about Uganda through photography lessons.

Along a similar vein, one avenue for parental partnership comes through having AIG Specialists actively recruit parents to serve as guest speakers (in alignment with curriculum units), as volunteers with grant initiatives and other projects, and as chaperones for AIG student field trips.

As we continue to seek out opportunities to build community based partnerships, we will also seek to strengthen existing partners. One such partnership exists with the University of North Carolina at Asheville. We work collaboratively with UNCA to provide and help encourage student participation with the popular Super Saturday program for students in grades 3 - 8. As funds have been available, we have also implemented a similarly structured "Super Summer/ Discovery Day @ UNCA" program for high school students to focus on college and career planning and exploration. This effort has been in collaboration with the Admissions and Special Programs Departments at UNCA, as well as, the College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC) through regional representation.

We also work with the business alliance through the Asheville High School and School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville (SILSA) partnership to expand opportunities beyond the 9th grade. The business alliance is a network of local businesses that provides input and feedback for high school programming, in the career and technical education department and would be able to support the creation of opportunities for mentorships and job shadowing options for those deeply interested in those areas. The CTE department offers an internship course, in which students can pursue their interest.

We achieved our goal from the last plan cycle to provide internship opportunities to Asheville High students. In an effort to promote this, the AIG Specialist at the high school invited the Coordinator in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) department for Internships to speak to the 9th grade AIG students about the criteria and aspects of doing an internship position. During the 2011-2012 school year of the 31 students who enrolled in Internships, 21 were AIG. During the 2012-2013 school year of the 34 students who enrolled in Internships, another 21 were AIG. Our goal is to continue to support AIG student participation in the formal internship opportunities available through the CTE department and to also seek additional avenues for such options.

As we strive to build upon past successes in partnering with community and parents, we also strive to improve communication with all stakeholders, especially parents. In an effort to better communicate with parents and families across the K-12 continuum, many approaches will be used to interact with and inform parents and families about gifted services.

To begin, AIG Specialists coordinate IDEP and DEP meetings with the school based service committees and the resulting information is mailed to parents for review and approval before beginning service delivery; parent conferences may result from receipt of this information. In facilitating this communication, faculty who provide service delivery options (AIG Specialists, counselors, classroom teachers) at a specific school are available at Open House programs of that school to assist with parent questions and/or concerns. AIG Specialists also provide annual AIG Parent Meetings to begin the year with clear expectations and understanding about services that will be provided in the current year. Recently, specialists have had successful turnout when scheduling parent information meetings in conjunction with other school-wide functions, thus taking parental schedules into consideration. The meetings are used to inform parents about the larger AIG plan of services for gifted learners, to include, identification practices, service delivery options, curriculum modifications, support for teachers and learners. Additionally, AIG Specialists often host specific grade level parent meetings and/or Parent University nights to share timely AIG service delivery option information and general information that is helpful to parents; for example, what to expect during the transition years with gifted learners, strategies to support the perfectionism often surfacing with gifted learners, information regarding extracurricular and co-curricular programming, appropriate acceleration options (within specific curriculum areas), and other information that parents request. Occasionally, guest speakers are utilized to provide information during these family events. As the year moves forward, AIG Specialists are also involved in conferences as needed with faculty members who provide service delivery options in order to ensure appropriate services are provided. When regular classroom teachers hold parent teacher conferences, the AIG Specialist is often called upon to participate in the conference to assist in the planning and delivering of services to meet the students' needs. In addition, the AIG Specialists are also involved with the IEP meetings of our twice exceptional children.

Throughout the year, parents receive regular reports about their child's progress in specific service delivery options. Every school has an AIG website that keeps parents abreast with upcoming activities and provides resources for parent and student exploration. A quarterly newsletter about the AIG program activities will be published at each level (elementary, middle, and high school) or articles will be submitted for publication in the school's newsletter that contain information relating to the AIG program. This information will be available in each school for any community member who would desire a copy and is sent to parents via both email and snail mail. Each school also has a Facebook page that AIG Specialists can utilize for sharing information about AIG activities.

Finally as opportunities for larger community enrichment (via our UNCA partnership, Duke TIP offerings and so on) become available, the AIG Specialists share this information via newsletter, website, parent conferences, and other avenues mentioned above.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Multiple modes of communication - Newsletters (school and district), website presence, conference logs/parent communication logs
Family night programs (agendas)
Surveys - evaluation of programming components
New and expanded partnerships will be established (meeting agendas)
Minutes of planning and evaluation meetings
Website and Facebook postings

Other Comments: At the current time, every elementary school and the middle school provides enrichment opportunities after school. These programs utilize the resources of many community

organizations to provide enrichment opportunities for all students. AIG Specialists encourage attendance at these programs, as needed or as appropriate for each child based on student interest and readiness.

During this plan cycle, we will be investigating ways of communicating that address the digital divide. We also hope to involve students in the sharing of district wide information related to gifted learners.

Practice 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Currently, there are processes that are in place to facilitate the sharing of information through newsletters, the ACS district website, individual AIG Specialists' and school websites, transition meetings (as students move from one grade span to the next), annual AIG parent meetings, and presentations to stakeholder groups, including the AIG Advisory Board and Board of Education.

Although we see much strength in this standard, we feel it should be focused because we know there are specific steps we can take to increase communication with our families, particularly when it comes to ensuring families understand our plan, our program, and the resources available to them.

Goals: 1. By December 2013, the AIG staff will create an AIG handbook for families containing information about the Asheville City Schools' AIG Plan and Program to ensure that all stakeholders have access to policies regarding programming for gifted education.
2. By the end of the 2013-2014 school year, the AIG staff will create an online resource bank attached to our AIG District website, in order to share our local plan and documents as well as to inform stakeholders about resources available through DPI, NCAGT, NAGC, and SENG.

Description: As a first effort with communication, parents of AIG students are invited to an annual group meeting to discuss the AIG program with an AIG Specialist. Typically this meeting is held in conjunction with the school's Open House program to ensure maximum participation and attendance of parents. Additionally, members of the AIG staff are available to speak to parents and community groups about various aspects of educating gifted students.

Our self assessment discussion reveals a need for specific resources and strategies to do a better job of "showcasing" our gifted program to the community. One such way is to ensure that we include information about what's happening at particular schools on the district AIG website.

Currently, the information available on the district website is a collection of useful documents and resources regarding AIG program services, but there is very little live or interactive news. To enhance this avenue of communication, the AIG staff will work to ensure that our district website provides further access and communication about the AIG program; including pertinent links to other AIG program pages, basic plan information, and helpful parent resource links. This enhanced web presence will take a collaborative effort on the part of the various AIG Specialists, the AIG Program Coordinator for the district, and the technology facilitators at each of the schools and at the district

level. This shift of thinking will require that some AIG staff (the AIG Program Coordinator specifically) are better trained at utilizing the tools available to continuously update and refresh the web materials as the district moves to a new web platform to better compliment tools and resources available at the school(s). The AIG Program Coordinator will schedule opportunities for this training to occur in the summer of 2013 or when our district web platform is changed and will provide timely updates on an as needed basis throughout the school year.

The Advisory Board also felt the need to better utilize our local news outlets; our newspaper, the Asheville Citizen-Times, local television (channel 16 - which regularly televises school news and broadcasts school events) and radio "In our Schools" to let the community know what we are doing, specifically, services provided and accomplishments of the students and to enhance communication with high school students and parents of high school students. Asheville City Schools already has on staff an outstanding Director of Community Relations, and so the AIG staff will need to work more collaboratively with this department to spotlight activities through local media.

Finally, the AIG Advisory Board sees the need to revise our current brochure to reflect changes to the AIG program, with details about philosophy and programming options. This brochure will be made available at each school for both current and prospective parents, as well as community members. While we serve a small population of non English speakers, we will also make sure that the brochure is made available in Spanish (or the native language of the gifted learner and his or her family). Copies of the brochure will be made available at each school and at the district offices, especially during times of school registration, when the district office is visited for such information. The brochure will be a valuable tool as we have extensively changed our identification and service delivery models, and will need to clearly and concisely communicate that information to all stakeholder groups.

In an effort to increase consistency between specialists and schools and to ensure clear communication, the district AIG Specialists will, with input from the AIG Advisory Board, also develop a handbook that will include information about our vision and mission, the role and structure of the AIG Advisory Board, current structure of the identification pathways for gifted learners, gifted indicators, the role of the AIG Specialists, clear explanation of school-based AIG committees, descriptions of learning environment options at each grade span, and the DEP, IDEP, and SER forms for each grade span. This handbook will help us also to clarify processes and best practices related to the function of the Gifted Services Committee as it relates to the need for further testing during identification, transfer of students, and monitoring the progress of students with an IDEP.

The AIG Specialists will also develop a resource bank to include all information in the handbook plus links to resources available through DPI, NCAGT, and SENG that can be utilized by parents, community members, and teachers.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Newsletter and other media articles

Individual school and district websites - an enhanced presence

AIG plan posted publically via district website (also hard copies available at central locations)

Revised Brochure

Handbook

Online resource bank

Other Comments:

Practice 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: As we have developed the AIG plan for serving gifted learners, we aggressively solicited feedback regarding the AIG program from all stakeholders both formally and informally through the use of survey instruments, and dialogue with parents and students.

Although we have an established Advisory Board with a diverse population of stakeholders invited, we have struggled with consistent commitment and attendance; therefore, we feel we need to make this a focused practice.

Goals: 1. Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, we will restructure the Advisory Board to increase participation with all AB activities and continue to improve our collaborative effort to guide and shape gifted programming in Asheville City Schools.
2. During the 2013-14 school year, the AIG staff will investigate alternative ways to elicit feedback about gifted programming from diverse community stakeholders.

Description: The ACS AIG Advisory Board is comprised of members of all stakeholder groups - AIG parents, gifted students, teachers, other certified support staff, school based administrators, district wide administrators, school board representation, university partner representative(s), AIG Specialists, and the AIG Coordinator. Participants were chosen based on a number of factors - including having an interest in gifted education services and having a desire to work to improve our services for gifted learners across the K-12 continuum.

Since our plan was "re-visioned" in the 2010-2011 school year, our Advisory Board has met on a quarterly basis. The primary purpose of these sessions has been to provide timely and appropriate feedback about the status of the action steps found within the plan, determine appropriate next steps in service delivery options, and to continue to keep track of the data regarding gifted learners in our district. During the 2012-13 school year, our Advisory Board added to its meeting format special topics sessions, designed to address the standards that needed the most attention and clarification; professional development needs, identification practices, and service delivery options. These special interest topic sessions allowed time for the attendees to hear gifted best practices and current research and theory in these areas, review data pertinent to ACS in these areas, as well as, time to voice feedback on current practices in order to make recommendations for revisions. These recommendations were then shared with the AIG Advisory Board and utilized by the AIG Specialists as goals were written for the new plan.

The stakeholder input was very positive and supportive regarding the Advisory Board's role, function, and the structure of meetings and activities, the use of the survey instruments, and the quality of data reviewed. However, there is a need to improve participation of all stakeholders with Advisory Board

activities. As a result, in the 2013-14 school year, our team will solicit feedback regarding factors that will make participation more feasible. For example, would providing childcare at meetings be helpful? Would certain dates and times be easier for stakeholders?

In response to the increasing difficulty in collecting survey data from a diverse representation of stakeholders, we also plan to investigate alternative ways to collecting feedback. One such example might be to hold focus groups; and to that end, our team has set aside funds in our operating budget to assist with contracting with a service provider to pull together the feedback from our focus group into a usable form. Our current timeline is to conduct student and parent/community focus groups in the spring of 2014 and fall of 2014 respectively.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Advisory Board Roster

Advisory Board meeting notes including presentations, data shared, and general agenda items for each meeting

Various AIG program evaluation surveys (different instrument for each stakeholder group - paper/pencil and electronic versions)

Other Comments:

Practice D

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

As previously stated, we inform parents and families about the AIG program in a variety of ways, however we do not currently have forms and letters available in languages other than English. Although we have a relatively small population of non-English speakers, there is a need for our district to commit to providing information in Spanish. Additionally, we feel it is important to determine if there is a need for forms to be available in other languages, and if so, to determine which languages. We do have interpreters on hand as needed, but we hope to develop a reference list with district teachers that speak other languages.

Goals:

1. By May 2014, and ongoing as new forms and letters are developed, we will have all AIG documents translated into Spanish to more effectively communicate with parents.
2. Throughout the plan cycle, we will investigate other native language needs and maintain a reference list of teachers and staff who speak other native languages.

Description:

As materials are created, we will work to ensure that they are also available in the native language(s)

of those students we serve. We recognize the need to put in place a system to communicate with parents during conference situations in the native language(s) of the families; which may involve using the services of a translator - and making a list of these resource persons available for all AIG Specialists. These print resource materials (newsletters, brochures, and so forth) will be available in both English and Spanish. A resource list of district staff that speak other languages will also be created in order to ensure all families have access to materials in their native language(s) and maintained electronically so that all specialists have appropriate and up to date access.

In developing our resource bank, we will contract with someone to translate all materials into Spanish and as needed, we will translate other materials (using individuals from the reference list of teachers and staff that we will begin to maintain). In this way, we are not recreating the wheel each time the need arises.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Documents provided in Spanish

A list of resource persons who will serve in a translating capacity

Newsletters and parent information brochure - available at various locations in Spanish.

Other Comments:

Practice E

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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

We currently partner with UNCA, our ACS Foundation, Duke TIP, and WCU, as well as working in Region 8 with WRESA to provide professional development, but we have additional partnerships that we would like to pursue to enhance and gain support for our program.

Additionally, because the ACS AIG Advisory Board recognizes that some children who are gifted may not be reaching their potential and in fact, may not even be recognized as gifted particularly when the students have had limited opportunities to learn, we believe that the development of additional partnerships is critical if we are to offer opportunities for developing their potential. To that end, our Advisory Board will continue to build and expand our partnership efforts with local colleges and universities, various local business and industry, and others to encourage and support gifted learners.

Goals: 1. By December 2013, representatives from the ACS AIG Department will meet with representatives from Buncombe County Schools to investigate the formation of a local PAGE chapter to advocate and support gifted learners in our region.

2. Throughout the course of the plan cycle, we will continue and expand our partnership with AHS/SILSA Business Alliance and the Career Technical Education Department, in order to provide opportunities to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of secondary gifted learners.
3. On a quarterly basis, representatives of the AIG Department will share program information with district community relations personnel in order to gain awareness of and support for AIG programs and services.

Description: Currently, we collaborate with the University of North Carolina at Asheville to provide and encourage participation with the Super Saturday program for students in grades 3 - 8. In this effort, our AIG Specialists serve as district liaisons to encourage the participation of ACS students. The University sponsors fall, spring, and occasional summer sessions of the Super Saturday Program. Our district, on the other hand utilizes local AIG funds to provide scholarships to cover registration expenses for those students who would otherwise be unable to participate.

In an effort to expand our partnership with UNCA our AIG department worked with the College Foundation of North Carolina to provide a "Super Saturday" type experience for high school students - the "Discovery Day at UNCA." This effort allowed high school students from both Asheville High School and SILSA (the School of Inquiry and Life Sciences at Asheville) to spend the day on campus with the purpose of focusing on the college admissions process as it relates to student interest and ability.

Since our introduction of a high school specialist, we have worked closely with the counseling department to provide resources and support for high school students as they begin to make college and future career plans. Additionally, at the high school, many guest speakers from our business alliance and external community partners have come into the classroom for a type of "lunch and learn" series. Our high school specialist has also served students directly in the classroom by teaching a section of "Cougar Success" once a week for students formally identified as gifted. The course was put in place many years ago to assist with the transition of students from 8th to 9th grade within the Freshman Experience (FX) program. As we look forward to seek out ways to build upon the curriculum utilized this school year and the guest speaker series, in order to better serve students at the secondary level, we have entered into discussion with the counselor about providing structured college visits for gifted learners to assist with their college and career planning. We have found this to be a highly successful component of our Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at both the middle and high school level, but since many of our gifted learners do not participate with AVID, we continue to hear concerns from students and parents that they feel they are missing a vital component of the college and career planning experience. To that end, we have earmarked some of our local funds to support these efforts for our high school students.

Although we have made much progress at the high school level during this past plan cycle, the AIG Advisory Board feels there is more we can do in terms of making partnership opportunities available for gifted learners. One way we intend to accomplish this is by creating an electronic contact list of AIG students for disseminating information and sharing opportunities. This list will be compiled by our high school AIG Specialist. In addition, this Specialist uses and will continue to use ConnectED (phone messages) to contact parents about upcoming events and activities.

We will also continue our partnership with the AHS/ SILSA Business alliance; the network of business

8/7/2013

professionals willing and able to provide mentorship and/or internship opportunities for gifted learners. We saw an increase in the participation of AIG students in this program last plan cycle that we hope to continue to grow.

Finally, as an effort to increase the advocacy efforts and support for all gifted learners and upon recommendation from the AIG Advisory Board, representatives from the ACS AIG district team will meet with stakeholder representatives of Buncombe County Schools to investigate the formation of a local PAGE chapter to advocate and support gifted learners in our region. Several meetings to begin this collaboration have taken place already and we look forward to a Fall 2013 meeting with the support of the statewide PAGE Coordinator to continue to assist with this effort.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Documentation of participation with the following efforts:

UNCA Super Saturday - number of scholarships provided for ACS students, and total number of students and AIG Specialists participating

Discovery Day @ UNCA - Registration numbers, materials purchased, notes and pictures from various presentations, agendas and workshop materials

Cougar Success - sessions held with AIG students (number of students served and accounts created), lesson plan materials utilized

New partnerships established

Other Comments:

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.

Practice A

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: In response to Article 9B, which requires local education agencies (LEAs) to develop a three year AIG local plan with specific components to be approved by the local school board and subsequently sent to the State Board of Education and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for review and comment, the Asheville City Schools AIG Advisory Board has completed the following activities:

1. Conducted a comprehensive review of our plan using data from a variety of sources (district strategic planning data, recent AdvancED accreditation data, stakeholder feedback surveys, feedback from our 2010 plan for serving gifted learners from NCDPI, data marking progress towards our goals in our interim report to NCDPI, student achievement data, child count data, over and under representation data, and dialogue with our Advisory Board and district team of AIG Specialists)
2. Self assessment of current programming status
3. Facilitated a series of Advisory Board meetings and Special Topics sessions to examine issues, current research and trends in gifted education, and make recommendations for future direction in gifted programming.

After these components were complete, the district team of AIG Specialists developed draft goals and strategies to improve services for gifted learners, utilizing feedback from the Advisory Board and participants at the various special topics sessions.

Once goals and strategies were outlined, the team of specialists presented this information back to the Advisory Board. With the support of the Advisory Board, we then presented the comprehensive plan, highlighting rationale for changes and the potential impact of the changes to the Board of Education for consideration on 10 June 2013. Contents of the plan were then approved at the following Board of Education meeting on 19 June 2013.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: During the 2012-13 school year, Asheville City Schools concluded the development of its 5-year strategic plan. This process included extensive surveys to all major stakeholders, as well as, individual interviews with community members over an eighteen month window. Data was gathered that focused on the needs of the district, as well as, individual school needs. The data shed

light on perception of district effectiveness with many major curricular programs, initiatives, including some feedback about gifted programming. With the guidance of an external facilitator, teams of stakeholders met to organize and analyze the data and create a new district mission, guiding principles, seven key strategies, and our new strategic imperative. The district curriculum and instruction team (our newly fashioned ACS Curriculum Council) then worked with the key strategies to develop SMART goals and accompanying strategies, action steps, and evidence of effectiveness measures that along with assigned persons responsible and target dates and timelines will keep us accountable for reaching the goals within the new strategic plan.

The additional data examined in creating the mission, guiding principles, and strategic imperative included, but was not limited to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey data, comprehensive student achievement data, student discipline data, staff retention and turnover data, parent outreach and community partnership data, fiscal accountability data, and information regarding school calendar options.

The new strategic planning process mirrored, in many ways, the process used by AIG Advisory Board during the revisioning of our plan in the 2009-10 school year, and data gathered during this process along with our annual professional development surveys to all staff and internal surveys regarding gifted services were integral factors in our development of the 2013-16 Plan for serving gifted learners in Asheville City Schools.

As the strategic plan was developed, the voices from the gifted community were present at the table and a part of the discussions that followed, to ensure that the needs of gifted learners was kept at the forefront of the agenda. As such, many concerns and issues regarding gifted learners were brought to light and many of the new initiatives we propose in this plan for serving gifted learners were developed during the strategic planning process. It is our hope that you will see examples of how we have furthered our objective in making sure that gifted programming is an integral part of the total comprehensive program in Asheville City Schools in our newly revised plan.

In the time since the 2010-13 plan, our team of AIG Specialists have worked closely together to assess our current reality and review programs and research that points to best practice with regards to identification and screening, professional development initiatives, and delivering appropriate services to gifted learners. Our team embarked on "Pockets of Excellence" tours, during which time, we investigated programming efforts in those three areas to determine how we could improve our local AIG plan for serving gifted learners. These efforts culminated in the 2012-13 school year as the team presented research and findings to the AIG Advisory Board and relied on the guidance of our Advisory Board to make recommendations that would change our program and help us move forward. The result of this work is reflected in our plan for serving gifted learners. We believe and stand firmly behind this plan for gifted services as it is based upon current best practices in gifted education and has been compiled with much regard for stakeholder input and as a result of a great deal of time and research in an effort to truly move forward in serving gifted learners to reach their fullest potential.

Over the course of the three year plan cycle (2013 - 2016), it is our intent to implement the plan outlined here with fidelity and to that end, we have intentionally put support structures in place to ensure that we continually revisit the intent of the plan and the goals therein to be sure we are on track. This constant checking in/ looking back to our plan will help us to realize the goal of the plan being an organic document that guides our action and programming efforts.

Throughout the life of this plan cycle, our team of AIG Specialists will collect the necessary data that will help us assess our progress towards the accomplishment of our vision, as outlined in our goals within each standard and to make recommendations for change as prescribed by the data collection process.

It is our belief that our implementation of this modified "plan-do-study-act" (PDSA) model will support our efforts to continuously improve our programming and move our district further along towards our vision of recognizing, challenging, and supporting gifted learners as they strive to reach their fullest potential.

Planned Sources of Evidence: AIG plan approved by Asheville City Board of Education - approved on 19 June 2013

Presentations and minutes of Advisory Board meetings

Presentations and minutes of Board of Education meetings

Other Comments:

Practice 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.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The Advisory Board (AB) meets on a quarterly basis during each school year, to review data and evaluate progress towards the goals of the AIG plan. The Advisory Board is comprised of members of all stakeholder groups, to include students, parents and/or guardians, teachers, other certified support staff, administrators - both school and district level, and the AIG staff.

Additionally, the AIG plan is revisited and revised with AIG Advisory Board input and guidance every 3 years, as mandated by Article 9B.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

In the upcoming plan revision cycle, 2013-16, the AIG Advisory Board (AB) has set a direction of program improvement utilizing the local plan as a guide. The goals outlined in this 6th generation plan will serve as action steps for our AB subcommittees to work on throughout the next three year period. The AB will work in standard groups (subcommittees) to monitor the implementation of the action steps outlined and organized in the plan.

In an effort to do so, the Advisory Board will utilize the following outline:

1. Recruitment of AB members:

Each summer, the AIG staff will send out invitations to current AB members to determine interest in continued service on the AB. For those who decline, the AIG staff will find replacement board members; keeping in mind continued representation from all stakeholder groups and a commitment to

continued balance of diversity of board members, in an effort to mirror our student population. Because of high district turnover at the end of the 2012-13 school year and the direct impact that turnover has on our AB membership, during the summer of 2013 our staff will begin the process of identifying a new AB by reaching out to many staff members who have not previously served in this capacity.

2. AIG AB work sessions:

Each year since 2010 - 11, the AB has met on a quarterly basis. Each of the quarterly meetings begins with a review of any data pertinent to the meeting objective; for example, if we are examining and evaluating student identification processes, data regarding student identification and demographics would be shared as the meeting began. Or, at various times during the year the AB may also review the following types of data: stakeholder input from various survey instruments (or participate in a review and revision of current survey instruments); student achievement and drop out data; or other pertinent information as requested by either the Advisory Board or the larger Asheville City Schools Board of Education. Following a "data review", each meeting will have time dedicated to updating the AB on various projects, research and activities of the district AIG team, and efforts to improve services provided for gifted learners. AB time is also spent with small standard groups (subcommittees) looking at the goals of the plan in order to create action plans for each standard to ensure work continues and we can therefore monitor progress towards our mission and vision. Occasionally, we also use AB time to share current trends and issues in gifted education, sharing resources as they become available and relate to the gifted learners in Asheville City Schools. In one instance, for example, we began the year by sharing resources from the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) advocacy toolkit - "The 10 Myths of Gifted Education" materials as a way to engage members in dialogue and focus attention around the purpose of the AB and to support the development of effective advocacy efforts for gifted learners.

*In the upcoming plan cycle, as the year goes on, agendas and presentations and/or other materials used will be posted to the staff intranet and district internet AIG page, in an effort to keep all stakeholders abreast of progress.

3. Board of Education Presentations

Additionally, the AIG staff will request to meet collectively, once per year, with the Asheville City Schools Board of Education to encourage dialogue regarding services provided to gifted learners. This presentation will include any data sharing, as well as, updates regarding progress towards goals outlined in the current local plan. As there is a member of our AB from the Board of Education, there is good collaboration about what the Board is interested in knowing more about and presentations are always flexible to answer questions and concerns that may have come to the attention of the Board of Education.

In addition to these efforts to assist with broadening the monitoring of AIG services to students and staff, the AIG staff will develop an assessment checklist to be utilized by the program coordinator and the Gifted Services Committee at each school to assess the level of support provided - through programs, policies, and practices - for gifted learners. The checklist will examine data and responses to the following concerns:

1. What is the student population at this school (to include the identified AIG population and overall student population)?
2. How are student placement decisions made and are students placed in classrooms with teachers AIG licensed or having met the local professional development criteria?

3. How is the schedule arranged to support time for the various service delivery groups to meet (the groups pulled by AIG Specialists)?
4. Is the schedule of the AIG Specialist developed or designed to provide support and resources to teachers (are time and materials provided for such collaboration - through the PLC meetings or if other opportunities are provided)?
5. How are the efforts at the school level aligned with district goals and progress?

With intentional planning of the structure, role, and function of the AB and with thoughtful monitoring tools developed and implemented, the ACS team of specialists along with the program coordinator will be better able and better prepared to effectively monitor and assess our program implementation efforts. This checklist will help inform the AIG staff and AB of potential needs and concerns at the school level, and will assist in brainstorming solutions to these concerns.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Agendas from Advisory Board meetings
Presentation materials for Board of Education meetings
School-based assessment to determine level of support for AIG programming

Other Comments:

Practice C

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Our current state and local funds in the AIG program budget are monitored closely by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of our district with support from the Coordinator for Gifted Programming. At this time all state funds allocated to Asheville City Schools are used to support gifted programming and additional local funds are provided to support our efforts.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: The CFO works closely with the AIG Program Coordinator and the Director of Exceptional Children's Programming and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction to monitor the adequate use of state allotted funds for gifted programming.

Systems are in place to ensure that funds are spent appropriately - check request and requisition processes ensure that funds are coded properly. Funding records (AS-400 spreadsheets) are shared with the AIG Program Coordinator to reflect ongoing balances, purchases, and encumbered funds, so that resources are utilized wisely. The AIG Coordinator works closely with the CFO of the district to examine how funds are being utilized to more effectively bring resources into the district; for example, the reallocation of funds in the 2009 - 10 and 2010-11 school years provided our district with a K-2 Nurturing Specialist to enhance the nurturing component for K-2 students and increased her service contract from 25 to 50% during that time. Additionally, as has been shared previously, in June 2013, the Board of Education approved the plan of the CFO to allocate a new staff position to the AIG Department; the first new position to our department in close to ten years! Moving forward during this

three year cycle, the AIG Coordinator will continue to work with the CFO and the Board of Education to examine options to bring more service delivery time to the schools as the needs of the school(s) dictate.

Currently, all state (034) funds are set aside to provide staffing for the AIG program. Local funds are utilized to provide additional staffing support, supplies and materials, offset costs for staff development and support local partnership opportunities (ex: scholarships to assist with the tuition for UNCA Super Saturday and Super Summer events).

Grant opportunities are sought after to help bring additional resources and materials into the program. For example, through the Asheville City Schools Foundation's Innovation Fellows (IF) grant staff development program, the AIG staff was able to help eight teachers in our district have the opportunity to expand Paideia seminars to gifted learners. In large part because of the success of this program, we have since applied for and received several additional Innovation Fellows grants from the Asheville City Schools Foundation to participate in self directed learning to benefit the AIG Specialists, the district team, the schools, and the larger AIG community. To date, grants have been received to study the Renzuili Schoolwide Enrichment Model, Eric Jensen's work related to teaching students of poverty (as part of an interdisciplinary team), Wormeli's work on differentiated grading and assessing within the context of the DuFour's Professional Learning Community (PLC) environment, and most recently to revise and revamp middle school science as a way of engaging gifted (and all) learners in the critical thinking and problem solving that naturally extends from quality science instruction. Over the last three years, our department has been awarded (either individually or as part of interdisciplinary teams) grants totaling over \$33,000. In addition, the ACS Foundation has supported our professional development efforts through the teacher scholarship program; a partnership that allowed our entire team to participate in the initial "Pockets of Excellence" tour which included a trip to the ECU One Day Conference (2011) and also allowed the team of specialists to visit 4 school districts along the way by providing workshop registration costs and matching travel costs for a segment of our team.

These grant experiences have greatly enhanced our team dynamic and have played a vital role in our own development. We further believe that we are fortunate to receive support from state and local sources to fund our gifted programming in a quality way.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Fund balance spreadsheets

Grants awarded

Increased service time and staffing across the district

Other Comments:

Practice D

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Our team of specialists recognizes that information regarding student performance growth and annual drop out data pertaining to AIG students is available and we have examined data in the

past. However, we are not yet doing this in an ongoing and consistent fashion. Therefore, our Advisory Board has determined that it is necessary to put processes in place for this sharing to occur.

Our goal is to create a plan to systematically examine and share the data gathered regarding student performance growth and annual drop-out data for AIG students. We also recognize that this systematic plan will need to include reaching out to data managers and the student success coordinator, and we have begun building those relationships and better understanding what data may be available to our team so that we can share the information with our Advisory Board and also the larger gifted community.

Our Board believes that while the vast majority of gifted children in our district are showing gains as we might hope and expect, there are some children who are gifted and are not reaching their potential - as is the case of the gifted underachiever. So as a part of plan to review this data, we will pay close attention to under-served populations and disproportionality issues that may surface. We do believe that our newly defined multiple pathways for identification and service delivery may address some of the issues that come up in trying to appropriately identify and serve students from underrepresented populations.

As we strive to function as a professional learning community (PLC), our AIG Specialists will partner with others who routinely examine data to help AIG Specialists to mine and be better consumers of data.

- Goals:**
1. In the fall of 2013, the AIG team will work with data managers at the school and system level to develop protocols to monitor and analyze student performance growth and annual dropout rate data for gifted learners.
 2. By the end of the 2013-14 school year and at the end of each subsequent school year, the student performance growth and annual dropout rate data for gifted learners will be shared with stakeholder groups in an effort to raise awareness of the effectiveness of the students' overall instructional program and to impact future placement options for gifted students.

Description: Through an enhanced website presence and a more active advocacy role, our goal is to provide an atmosphere of transparent sharing of all data. This will be reflected by the AIG staff who will track and share student data and further report on all gifted learners on an annual basis. This data will be reviewed with the Gifted Services Committee at each school, as well as the larger Advisory Board. Data will then be compiled to share with the ACS Board of Education.

Moving to a new student information system will necessitate that specialists are thoughtful about how to gather and share data - within the parameters of the new system. In an effort to meet our goals in this area, the team of specialists and program coordinator will work closely with those data managers to have an understanding of how to access data available and once we have an understanding of the new system, will put together a plan for monitoring and analyzing data available. With the help of the Advisory Board, the specialists will then develop an action plan for the transparent sharing of all data; taking into consideration what data is available, what data is helpful to analyze and share, and how to post data to each target audience appropriately (what factors should be taken into consideration).

To that end, we have already begun to invite our district wide data manager to Advisory Board meetings to present data in a user-friendly format, and to our district team meetings to help "tease out" the data we need as we move forward with programming changes.

When considering data to examine and share, our Advisory Board and Board of Education are most interested in having a better understanding of the following: student achievement (proficiency and growth) data, program enrollment information (overall numbers and the breakdown of services students receive), and drop out data, as well as sharing how the resources of the program are spent - both fiscal and human resources. The Advisory Board is also very interested in having information about indicators that speak to the "success" of AIG students - not solely test data. This information might include numbers of students participating in internships and mentorship opportunities, college acceptance and scholarship information, numbers of students taking advanced course work (and experiencing success), and student perceptions of all experiences (as measured by our annual student survey).

This data accurately reflects an idea of where the AIG program is at any given time - from a system perspective (based on grade spans). The data listed above also serves as a template to utilize each year with our annual Board of Education presentation, thus making it possible to clearly see trends and patterns in the data.

We believe these efforts will help foster a better understanding of the needs for gifted programming, as well as will help us to celebrate our successes and more clearly see areas that need our attention.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Website information available
Data presented to both the Board of Education and the AIG Advisory Board.

Other Comments:

Practice 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.

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: As the Advisory Board and team of specialists considered this practice, we came to the following conclusions:

Because we do not "de-gift" students, our retention rate is technically 100%. However, we do understand that some students feel as though they have been "de-gifted" when levels of service are changed (due to current achievement and aptitude data). This typically happens during the transition years.

Also, we noted that because we do not remove students from services, there has not been any push to systematically collect and analyze data regarding retention. Our specialists have instead focused on monitoring the overall program population by maintaining accurate databases and providing and cross checking the information with the data managers at each school.

We aggressively seek to include and serve students from underrepresented populations, as strategies outlined in standard 1 demonstrate. However, to date, we have not made intentional efforts to examine sub group population data on a consistent and ongoing fashion. From time to time,

as questions are asked, we have examined our data to ensure that we are inclusive of under-represented populations but this data examination practice is not systemic at this point.

While there has been a push to monitor the representation on culturally/ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged populations in the AIG program, there has not been a push to monitor the representation of twice exceptional, highly gifted, or English Language Learners.

As a result, we feel this must be a focused practice.

Goals: 1. By December 2013, the AIG team will develop protocols and a common database to monitor and analyze qualification and retention data of gifted learners (including students who are culturally/ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged, English language learners, highly gifted, and twice-exceptional).

Description: Historically, the ACS district has aggressively sought out means to identify potentially gifted learners from underserved populations.

We have studied our representation data - and in doing so, we now have feedback about how changes to our previous generation Local AIG plans have either been successful or not. Again, all of this data to date has focused on the representation of culturally and ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged students, not twice exceptional, highly gifted, or English Language Learners.

We believe that once students are identified as gifted they continue to be served throughout his or her educational career in ACS: following a "once gifted – always gifted" approach. Until this plan review, the annual review process looked carefully at data regarding each students' performance, achievement, aptitude, observation, interest, and motivation - and we closely monitored a student's ever changing needs and would adjust the level and type of service, as the data directed. While we will continue to have an annual review process in place, we will be looking to different sources of data to gauge a student's progress in his or her current level of service; and will no longer include end of grade testing data, interest, or motivation (except in cases of transition years when we collect data in a new Gifted Rating Scale). Therefore, services may still change (either increasing or decreasing) based on available data.

As a result of this philosophy and practice, we have not tracked the retention data; rather we have focused on the representation component. During the next three year cycle, we will begin to more closely track not only the representation of other subgroups of under-represented populations, but also monitor the retention of each subgroup within given service delivery options in an effort to better assess our program's effectiveness. In other words, we will more closely monitor the representation of ALL subgroups within each of the new service delivery options. We will also monitor how these numbers change as new data becomes available, and look for trends that might suggest a need for policy change. This will be a baseline year of sorts, in that our service delivery options have been redesigned, and so we will monitor how a student's services within the new service delivery model may change as new data becomes available. Our district team of specialists along with support and guidance from the Advisory Board, will determine a data tracking tool to monitor this data and then report the information at the end of each year.

Our current practice dictates that our AIG Specialists maintain a school-wide database each year, that allows our staff to monitor representation of all students and their current services delivered at any given point. As we look to our goal of standardizing this information and finding a secure way to track the data online, this goal of monitoring and analyzing representation and retention data will become a reality - and as data trends are noted, recommendations for change can be made.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

AIG school and district database

Student retention data - as reported by underrepresented population subgroup

Student demographic data (now housed in PowerSchool/ Homebase)

Other Comments:

Practice F

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: We believe that because the learning needs of children who are gifted are different from other children of their age, experience, or environment, teachers responsible for these students must have an appropriate base of knowledge and skills to meet these needs. Currently we track the AIG staff, to ensure those involved in this coaching capacity and who deliver instruction in our small group settings do have training as necessary to work with gifted learners as defined by our state's guidelines for AIG add-on licensure and are seeking to go beyond that level of certification and understanding.

In our K-12 environment, however, the primary learning environment for gifted students is the regular classroom. At this time, we do not currently monitor the credentials of regular classroom teachers serving gifted students, outside of those who have earned AIG add-on licensure, and as such, we have been unable to ensure that scheduling decisions take into account the training teachers have had to work with gifted learners. Furthermore, because we have never had local professional development criteria for serving gifted learners in place, there was no real reason to track the data or any way to ensure that teachers had the training necessary to work with gifted learners.

As this issue surfaced during the data collection stage of the recent strategic planning process, and in part because the Advisory Board has shared that AIG licensure/certification helps all teachers and students, it was determined that there was definitely a need to set forth clear guidelines for minimum competencies in working with gifted learners and to provide support for teachers and other certified staff to participate with these efforts. These steps are now outlined in standard 3 (practices c and d), and in order to meet the goals of this practice, our newly developed "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document necessitates that we develop a tool to monitor the completion of local professional development criteria, in addition to, the licensure coursework.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: In our previous plan, our goals with respect to this practice were to create a method for collecting and sharing information regarding the credentials of personnel serving AIG students and to develop minimum criteria for regular classroom teachers and other certified support staff who serve gifted students in both the advanced subject group and cluster group environments - and to have these credentials approved by the Board of Education. As has been mentioned previously, our Advisory Board did present and have approved a new set of minimum competencies; outlined in our "Levels of Understanding" (LOU) document. Additionally, our program coordinator has begun sharing with Advisory Board members and other appropriate audiences information about staff currently certified with AIG add-on licensure.

Again, the Advisory Board feels it is in the best interest of all students to have as many teachers as possible trained in gifted methodology. Therefore, we feel that maintaining a database of teachers who have already earned AIG add-on licensure and celebrating those teachers - as we do those teachers who earn National Board Certification, for example, is one step in encouraging others to seek out add on licensure. As an alternative to the add on licensure, the AIG staff along with the Advisory Board members worked to develop the local professional development criteria as outlined in the LOU. The LOU has now been presented to the Board of Education and was approved along with incentives to encourage teachers to seek out the local professional development criteria as well.

Now that this LOU component is in place, our program coordinator is able to firmly support principals and counselors responsible for student scheduling in making student placement decisions based on the licensure and training of staff. We expect this to begin in the 2014-15 school year.

Additionally, the Leadership Team with support from the AIG Program Coordinator has found existing dollars within the budget to be redirected towards providing teacher scholarships for those teachers interested in pursuing AIG add-on licensure or meeting the local professional development criteria. As these funds are now available, the district team of specialists along with the Advisory Board will in the fall of 2013 begin making teachers aware of scholarship opportunities for those interested in attaining AIG certification. As well, we will continue to develop partnerships with university partners and the Western Regional Education Service Alliance (WRESA) to provide both local and online programs to suit teachers needs, so that pursuing AIG licensure is feasible and manageable in all respects.

As a result of these efforts, our program coordinator and Advisory Board will need to develop a tool to monitor the participation of teachers in coursework which leads to both add-on licensure, and the successful completion of local professional development criteria.

Throughout this three year plan cycle, the AIG Program Coordinator will work to maintain accurate and current records of teachers seeking out AIG certification - either having met the local professional development criteria or having earned add on licensure; and will keep both the AIG Advisory Board and ACS Board of Education abreast of these efforts and progress.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Number of AIG certified teachers and those having met the local professional development criteria.

Tracking tool to monitor teacher participation in these efforts

Financial records documenting use of AIG and Title II funds to assist teachers with professional development leading towards AIG add on licensure and/or having met the professional development criteria outlined in the LOU

Beginning in 2014-15, reports of student placement

Other Comments:

Practice 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.

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

While we currently have an Advisory Board in place, we do see the need to improve in the following areas:

More closely aligning the demographics of the Advisory Board membership to the AIG student population (diversity of participants - cultural/ethnic background, experiences with gifted education, appropriate grade span representation, etc)

Finding ways to further involve students; as gifted high school learners are often unavailable for afternoon/evening meetings

Finding participants who will commit to an entire year process; if not the three year cycle to maintain continuity throughout the life of the plan

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: As discussed previously in standards 3 and 5 our Advisory Board is a collective group that works to handle issues related to gifted education. In this year of revising our plan, the focus of our work has been on understanding gifted best practice, and presenting theory and current research on particular topics (our own self-directed "Pockets of Excellence" research as well as research from more formal research sources) in order to make informed programming recommendations when given the context of Asheville City Schools' student data.

As we analyze the diversity of the Advisory Board, we find the following to be true of the invited participants / stakeholders:

AIG staff - 15%
School administrators - 7%,
District administrators - 20%
Certified support staff - 18%
Regular classroom teachers - 20%
College and university partner representative - 2%
Parents - 10%
Students - 2%
Board of Education representative - 2%

The school based Advisory Board members also represent the following gradespans:

Elementary - 23%

Middle grades - 18%

High school - 7%

District personnel and K-12 staff - 32%

(External community partners and parents are not included in this count)

The following ethnic groups are currently represented:

Caucasian - 85%

African-American -10%

Other minority- 5%

Special Disclaimer/ Considerations-

First, staff members that participated on the AIG Advisory Board are often also the parents of AIG students within Asheville City Schools, yet for this purpose, they were categorized in the appropriate staff member heading. Second, you will note that this represents the invited participants. As a concern this year, for the first time, we experienced a lack of commitment on the part of our Advisory Board members, such that we had many absences and a general feel of "burnout" with the work of action planning. During informal dialogue, interestingly enough, many Advisory Board members did point to a burnout from the strategic planning process and a need to focus efforts on the common core implementation. In addition, many teachers and school staff members felt enormous pressure to limit involvement with outside activities with all of the changes in curriculum, assessment, and general direction this year.

As a result, as shared in standard 6B, our team of specialists will spend thoughtful time during summer planning, designing a recruitment campaign to bring on board a new group to serve over the next three years with the Advisory Board. As shared throughout this document, the role of the Advisory Board is to review information that will guide and direct programming efforts and changes for gifted learners and to advocate to ensure that the gifted perspective is not overlooked in the overall function of the district.

Additionally, in the upcoming year, we will seek the input of high school students as we arrange focus group discussions with randomly selected high school students. To facilitate this discussion, our programming budget has set aside funds to hire an individual to transcribe and code the notes that are gathered. We will conduct the focus groups in collaboration with our university research partners from Western Carolina University and the data will be shared with the Gifted Services Committee of the high schools, the larger Advisory Board, and the Board of Education as we continue to research service delivery options appropriate for our gifted high school students.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Data regarding the membership of our Advisory Board
Agendas, minutes from high school focus group sessions
Recruitment plan for the new AIG Advisory Board

Other Comments:

Practice H

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Primarily our district seeks feedback regarding our services through surveys; however, in our last plan cycle, the Advisory Board felt that the data was not consistently sought after from all stakeholder groups on a regular basis. To alleviate this issue, the AIG staff began conducting annual AIG surveys to gather feedback from various stakeholder groups.

Surveys were essentially the same template, but used verbiage that was appropriate for the three groups of students targeted (those in grades 5, 8, and 12), the parents, the regular classroom teachers, and all other certified support staff. While our hope was to increase the participation rate of each stakeholder group to 75%, we fell painfully shy of that goal.

Our initial idea was to conduct surveys early in the spring of each year, which seemed a logical time frame, but in our first year we almost immediately bumped into the window of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. In adjusting our time frame to the fall, we then ran into another snag, as the district distributed a massive survey to all stakeholders (the same audience essentially) to gather data to shape and inform the strategic planning process. So, while we do have data available for the three years of the plan, we have also tapped into the other data collected during this time that is applicable to gifted learners. In addition, we have gathered qualitative data from Advisory Board members all along the three year plan window, via informal "exit slips and other assessments" during AB meetings.

During our summer planning process, our goal is to refashion a plan to collect data from all stakeholders, taking into account the various other survey instruments currently utilized in our district.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: Our district as a whole conducts a traditional paper and pencil survey that is anonymous and gathers feedback about many issues – including the curriculum, school safety, teacher effectiveness, leadership, and facility maintenance. While some insight may be gleaned from this biennial survey, our AIG staff also conducts an annual survey regarding service specific to gifted learners. Over the course of the 2010-13 plan cycle, the AIG staff released several versions of the AIG survey to include feedback from all stakeholder groups; students, parents, teachers, and certified support staff (i.e., AIG teachers, content area coaches, district and school administrators, counselors, psychologists, and so on). Each version of the survey collected data about each of the six AIG program standards, using language appropriate for the audience, and targeted the actual design of the instrument towards gathering input the group could actually speak to. For example, we did not seek out the same information about identification practices from the students that we asked of the staff; the questions then were tailored to the target audience.

For parents, the survey was made available in an online format, while the paper and pencil version was simultaneously mailed to the household of every AIG student included in the NC Wise "child count" data. Students in the transition years – grades 5, 8, and 12 – had an opportunity to participate

in the survey online, and in the same manner staff mentioned above had access to the survey.

In this revision year, as our district had just completed an eighteen month process of revising our district strategic plan, and we had attempted to gather data via survey in the late spring of 2012, we did not gather additional data using the survey method. We instead tapped into the strategic planning survey and the annual needs assessment survey, as it related to the needs of staff regarding serving gifted learners.

While our Advisory Board received a great deal of positive feedback about the survey process and the design of the instruments, there was concern about the low rate of participation. Therefore, in the upcoming plan cycle, we will be more strategic in our attempts to gather additional information from parents by using existing parent and curriculum night programs or other school wide functions and have parent surveys available. While the Advisory Board felt the development and use of the online survey was helpful, we will continue to send out the traditional paper and pencil surveys to bridge the digital divide that often exists in communities as diverse as Asheville City. To encourage additional certified staff participation, we will communicate with school administration to take time during other faculty gatherings to conduct the online survey. Students have an opportunity to complete the survey in an online format during the school day, and will continue to do so each year. We did learn though that while the younger student population was an easy target group with an almost 100% participation rate, the high school students are a bit harder to manage within the parameters of the daily schedule. To that end, we will seek to gather information from high school students in a variety of ways in the coming year(s), to include a focus group to determine the needs of our secondary learners.

As it is our goal to continue to gather data from all stakeholder groups on an annual basis and share the data with AIG Advisory Board and ACS Board of Education each year, our team and Advisory Board are investigating ways to ensure the data is meaningful and truly representative of stakeholder perceptions.

In the past few years, the survey has not been as consistent as the Advisory Board would have liked. Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, the survey will be distributed during a four to six week window for collection, during a time of the year when things are less busy than at the start and finish of a school year, but will also not interfere or be hampered by other district or state wide surveys. Additionally, we will seek to find alternative ways to gather the input of all stakeholder groups.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Increased percentage of parents and teachers who complete survey
Results communicated to AIG Advisory Board and Board of Education

Other Comments:

Practice I

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The ACS AIG plan has been reviewed and revised over this three year cycle, utilizing data available from a variety of sources. Additionally, Asheville City Schools has responded in appropriate

ways to current research and best practice theory as it becomes widely available and strives to also address concerns from parent groups and ACAE as they are made known. Because our Advisory Board and School Board members believe that by examining data from many sources, and understanding the "story behind the data", is the best source of information to reshape practice and improve program effectiveness, the AIG staff strives to include comprehensive data in an effort to review and revise our program.

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description: Historically, AIG Specialists have worked alongside NC Wise data managers to input and monitor student services data. NC Wise was a useful tool as it housed a great deal of student information. As we begin this new cycle, we will be moving into the new statewide Homepage and PowerSchool portal. All specialists and the program coordinator have completed initial online training modules, however, we anticipate a need to work closely with data managers to help us gather data from the new system to utilize in the determination of programming options for students.

In our annual presentation to the Board of Education, we attempt to share the following comprehensive data, gathered with help from the school data managers, our district wide student success coordinator, and other certified support staff as needed:

General enrollment data – number of students served in AIG program (disaggregated by ethnic group, socioeconomic status, and other underrepresented categories)

Student achievement data - typically End of grade (including reading, mathematics, and science) and End of Course data. Recently, the Board has also been interested in ACT, PLAN, and EXPLORE data as well, and we will begin sharing this information in a more formal way in upcoming presentations.

Student aptitude data (SAT and PSAT data for those participating and as available)

Other Student performance data - Career and Technical Education (number of courses taken, student success in various courses, students participating in "completer" courses); AP/ Honors/ Dual Enrollment/ NC Virtual Public School courses– number of students enrolled in variety of courses, student success in courses; AVID program – number of AIG students participating and student success in coursework and end outcomes (graduation, preparation towards college); Enrollment in Performing and Visual Arts and Foreign Languages; Enrollment and success of students in math courses beyond Algebra II, and science courses beyond Chemistry. With the new Measures of Student Learning (MSLs), our team will brainstorm additional data sources that will be readily available and share that information as well.

Student drop out data and the number of students enrolled in our alternative education program now housed at the William Randolph School

Qualitative data in the form of "plan review feedback" from the NC Department of Public Instruction's Expert Review Panel

Annual survey data assessment (survey data collected from certified staff, parents, and students in transition grades – 5, 8, and 12)

Data from high school focus group regarding services desired.

Data from pilot programs; for example, in 2010-11 and 2011-12, ACS piloted the School-wide Enrichment Model (SEM) at the middle grades. Data was shared with the Board of Education (and the Advisory Board) about the success of the SEM. After a one year break (due to leadership transition and philosophy change), we hope to bring back the SEM to the middle school based in large part to the data pointing towards the program's success.

Self assessment of school programming (using developed school wide services checklist).

Informal data gathered from dialogue with principals, parents, students, and other stakeholders (including the comment sections of various surveys).

In sharing and analyzing the data outlined above (all available student data, the annual survey data regarding gifted programming, qualitative summary comments and concerns from DPI) and current research as it becomes available, the Advisory Board will be afforded great assistance and is able to provide guidance to the AIG staff as we strive to revise our plan and implement changes with fidelity, in an effort to challenge our gifted learners to reach their fullest potential.

Planned Sources of Evidence: Data shared with the Advisory Board and Board of Education and suggested changes to the plan as a result
Data from plan review (from DPI) - along with data collected in house should drive future plan reviews

Other Comments:

Practice J

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: Each year the AIG Department has distributed AIG surveys to gather feedback and input about gifted programming. Generally, this data is shared with the AIG Advisory Board, the ACS Leadership Team, and the Board of Education. As a next step, we will find ways to intentionally share the information with other stakeholder groups in meaningful and targeted ways.

Goals: 1. In the fall of 2013, the AIG team will research, develop, and implement a revised comprehensive plan to gather feedback annually from stakeholders to evaluate the AIG program and shape future plan revisions.

2. During each year of the plan cycle, the AIG team will inform all stakeholders of evaluation data through a variety of formats, which may include, Board of Education presentations, principal and other administrative team meetings, the AIG Advisory Board meetings, AIG newsletters, School Planning and Management Team meetings, and inclusion on the district AIG website.

Description: We believe that by sharing all available data, we will encourage open and honest dialogue among stakeholders to improve gifted services. To that end, we will present to the Board of Education on an annual basis all available data regarding student achievement, student performance, student aptitude, student enrollment in our program (including representation and retention of various subgroups and the variety of service delivery options various subgroups represent), AIG drop out data, and participation with other district efforts as outlined in standard 6 practice I, as well as, data from annual survey sources.

As the Board of Education meetings in our district are locally televised, with follow up newspaper and district website articles – this presentation will not only reach the primary target audience of the board members, but will reach the larger community as well. Additionally, all data presented to the Board of Education will then be posted to both our staff intranet and district wide internet pages.

As an added measure of transparency, we will begin to share data from program evaluation surveys through district and school wide newsletters, and the AIG district wide team of specialists will also brainstorm other avenues of sharing all information about gifted programming, in an effort to move our program closer towards our vision and mission.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Data presented to the Advisory Board and the Board of Education
Incorporation of data presented by the Student Success Coordinator regarding student drop out
Annual report posted to both intranet and internet sites

Other Comments:

Practice K

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale: The Asheville City Schools Board of Education has adopted district policies that are in place to guide and protect the rights of gifted learners. Copies of these policies are distributed to all students and families upon entry into our program and at any time a change to student services is made (i.e., during transition years to different grade spans or during annual review process).

Goals: This section does not need to be completed based on the chosen category of the practice.

Description:

Because our Advisory Board has received feedback that our stakeholders are satisfied that the rights of all AIG students are protected through policies, procedures, and practices, we will continue the use of our Board of Education approved materials found within this plan for gifted programming.

In the Appendix are copies of both the "Procedure to Resolve Disagreements," which is distributed during initial screening, referral, placement, and review processes, and the "Best Practices in Gifted Education" document, as this document is referenced throughout the plan and serves as a helpful

resource of simply stated beliefs that have greatly impacted and shaped our policies and our approach to serving gifted learners. Our "Procedure to Resolve Disagreements" has been recently revised so that it is in alignment with changes to local school board policy relating to student appeal hearings.

Throughout the plan itself, readers will find step by step guidelines that serve to clarify our procedures for serving gifted students.

Attached to both standards 1 and 4, additional forms like the Student Eligibility Record, Differentiated Education Plan, and Individual Differentiated Plan can be found. These forms have been recently revised to appropriately reflect our new multiple pathways approach to identification and our newly redesigned services delivery model. These documents are critical to ensuring that student's rights are protected, and that students receive appropriate services.

Additional letters and communication protocols will be updated during our summer and fall planning days to keep in accordance with the changes to the plan.

During the current plan cycle, we will continue to solicit feedback about the level of confidence stakeholders feel with regards to protecting student rights, and we will make adjustments as we determine will be healthy for the forward progress of our program.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Copies of Appendix documents - Student Eligibility Record, Differentiated Education Plan, Individual Differentiated Plan, Procedure to Resolve Disagreement, Best Practices for Gifted Education
Documentation of any disagreements started in the grievance process
Student folders containing service documentation

Other Comments:

Glossary (optional):

See uploaded document in appendix (glossary.doc)

Appendix (optional):

2013_16_IDEP draft.doc (*Appendix - Standard 1:4*)

2013_16_SER draft.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1:4*)

ACS_DEP 2013.16.doc (*Appendix - Standard 1:4*)

IDEP_progress monitoring record.docx (*Appendix - Standard 1:4*)

ACS levels of understanding.pd.xls (*Appendix - Standard 3*)

AIG Classroom Teacher Status Report (Clustering Report AMS).docx (*Appendix - Standard 3*)

AIG Classroom Teacher Status Report (Clustering Report elem).docx (*Appendix - Standard 3*)

AIG Service Delivery Model 2013_16.doc (*Appendix - Standard 4*)

AMS Online Learning Checklist.doc (*Appendix - Standard 4*)

2013_PROCEDURE TO RESOLVE DISAGREEMENT.doc (*Appendix - Standard 6*)

2010 plan.Best Practices in Gifted Education.doc (*Appendix*)

Glossary.2013.doc (*Appendix*)