

Mitchell County Schools
Local Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Plan
Effective 2013-2016

Approved by local Board of Education on: 15-APR-13

LEA Superintendent's Name: Dr. Richard Spurling

LEA AIG Contact Name: Dana Hollifield

Submitted to NC Department of Public Instruction on: JUNE 11, 2013, 09:57:45

Revision Submitted to NC Department of Public Instruction on: JUNE 11, 2013, 09:57:45

Mitchell County 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, Mitchell County Schools local AIG plan is as follows:

Mitchell County Schools Vision for local AIG program: Mitchell County Schools' vision is to be a school district in which every student will, upon graduation, be both locally and globally competitive and college/career ready. Our core values and beliefs address the following concepts:

- Diversity – Students have distinct needs and goals and deserve unique relationships.
- Collaboration/Accountability – We hold ourselves accountable for building relationships that expand opportunities for students.
- High Expectations/Hard Work – The highest level of personal responsibility and a high work ethic produces positive results.
- Adaptability/Innovation – Producing successful 21st century learners requires creatively approaching challenges and opportunities.
- Integrity – Respect and honesty in everything, by everyone, is the core of ethical practice.
- Compassion – Empathy and kindness build strong school communities.

The Mitchell County Board of Education and the LEA recognizes that there are students who, when compared with others of their age, show the potential for high performance capabilities either in specific academic fields, intellectual areas, or both. Our LEA supports the belief that each child has an equal opportunity to receive a program of differentiated educational experiences, beyond those

8/8/2013

provided by the regular educational program, that meets their academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs. These students are present in our population regardless of gender, various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, or other learning exceptionalities. The LEA and the Board of Education affirm the following:

- It is the responsibility of the LEA, through the direction of the AIG program, to modify curriculum in the regular classroom setting in order to provide appropriate levels of challenge for all students, including those identified as gifted. This requires the ongoing screening, referral, and identification of these students.
- It is also our LEA's responsibility to provide students with specialized instruction delivered by highly qualified personnel within a range of instructional settings that are integrated with, but apart from, the regular curriculum.

Our LEA and Board of Education commits to providing students an opportunity to discover and reach their potential by maintaining a program for academically and intellectually gifted students that responds to best practices and research in gifted education, and state AIG program standards. Our mission is to collaborate with families and community partners to provide a safe, caring, and engaging learning environment that prepares all graduates to become responsible 21st century citizens in a diverse, global society.

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

State Funding	Local Funding	Grant Funding	Other Funding
\$102334.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Table of Contents

Standard 1: Student Identification	4
Standard 2: Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction	16
Standard 3: Personnel and Professional Development	28
Standard 4: Comprehensive Programming within a Total School Community	37
Standard 5: Partnerships	47
Standard 6: Program Accountability	53

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program conducted stakeholder surveys during the 2012 - 2013 school year. While our program is already utilizing various communication strategies, some parents/families either desire more frequent and meaningful contacts or do not feel that they are being reached effectively. Our program will focus on this practice during the 2013 - 2016 plan cycle to improve both the means and the frequency of contact with all stakeholders.

Goals:

- The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program will continue to conduct annual stakeholder surveys as part of our program evaluations.
- We will employ multiple communication strategies to solicit input from stakeholders on a continuous basis.
- Program brochures will be developed and the AIG portion of the district website will be redesigned and updated on a regular basis, and will include a calendar of events.
- AIG program representatives (the coordinator and/or Advisory Council members and lead teachers) will maintain a presence and role in school transitions, including high school registration.
- The Mitchell County Schools Administration and the Board of Education will receive at least annual updates on program evaluations.
- The local media (newspapers, radio, etc.) will be utilized to facilitate the dissemination of information to the public.

Description:

Effective communication plans are a vital aspect of gifted education programming. It is essential that clear information is available to all relevant stakeholders regarding student identification policies and practices. An effective communication plan for a gifted program's screening, referral, and identification procedures should be clear, meaningful, and timely, as well as respectful and relevant, while anticipating possible misconceptions. Such communications are best aligned with other district communication approaches, and based on an analysis of the needs of each constituency group. Local groups of stakeholders include students, parents, teachers, administrators/central office personnel, local board of education members, and the community at large. These constituent groups have been identified and input sought through various means such as surveys and one-on-one conferences. The AIG Advisory Council analyzes stakeholder input annually and the most effective

and efficient communication methods for each group are identified. There are means included in these methods for further feedback and input from stakeholders. The information the Mitchell County Schools AIG program strives to share with stakeholders is relevant and reasonable (neither inadequate or overwhelming), and care is taken to see that it is precise and accurate. The frequency and timing of our communications with stakeholders is determined with the needs and responsibilities of each group in mind.

*Note – All communications should include translations into needed languages when possible. *

Planned Sources of Evidence:

Students:

- Program introduction at the elementary level (3rd grade screening pool) with updates on identification process for students at key school transition points, provided by teachers/AIG Coordinator.
- Program brochure highlighting opportunities for students and providing contact information.
- AIG program presence at high school registration with information available on identification.
- Website at the district level that includes a description of the identification process.

Parents:

- Informational meetings held at key school transitions to share identification procedures.
- Parent survey responses concerning awareness of identification procedures.
- Program brochure highlighting opportunities for students and providing contact information.
- Direct mailings sent to homes of referrals.
- Website at the district level that includes a description of the identification process.
- Flyers sent to all homes describing the gifted program and identification procedures and providing contact information.

Teachers:

- Faculty survey responses concerning awareness of identification procedures.
- Agenda/sign-in sheets/presentations at faculty meeting and/or staff development in which identification procedures are outlined and shared.
- Website at the district level that includes a description of the identification process.
- Introduction of a program handbook of identification procedures that includes specific instructions on teacher referral and recommendations (also available on district website).
- E-mail communications.

Administrators:

- Presentations at administrative meetings to include updates on AIG program, including updates on student identification
- Faculty survey responses concerning awareness of identification procedures.
- Agenda/sign-in sheets/presentations at faculty meeting and/or staff development in which identification procedures are outlined and shared.
- Website at the district level that includes a description of the identification process.

- Introduction of a program handbook of identification procedures that includes specific instructions on teacher referral and recommendations (also available on district website).
- E-mail communications.

Board of Education Members:

- Program overviews and updates through memoranda and e-mail communications.
- Program budget annual reports that detail budgetary needs for identification procedures.
- Website at the district level that includes a description of the identification process.

Community /Media:

- Brochures outlining program areas including identification procedures available in public locations.
- Presentations at PTA meetings, civic groups, etc.
- Press releases/news articles to include any program updates and share identification procedures.
- Website at the district level that includes a description of the identification process.

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:

During the 2010 – 2013 plan cycle, considerable effort was made by the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program and the AIG Advisory Council to improve the screening, referral, and identification process in our LEA. Identification procedures and timelines were made available on the district website, as well as being included in mailings for parents of referrals. Also, our program began using the NNAT2 (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test) in an effort to include possible identification of diverse populations that exist in our LEA such as ESL students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. The CogAT Screener and full batteries are also being utilized in an effort to compile a more comprehensive profile for each student. While we plan to maintain the indicators we have implemented, during the 2013 – 2016 plan cycle, we want to continue our focus on improving these procedures. We will look for a standardized achievement indicator to replace End-of-Grade (EOG) test scores, as well as convert from the use of the GRS (Gifted Rating Scales), which only includes standardized teacher ratings, to the use of SIGS (Scales for Identifying Gifted Students). The SIGS will provide us with standardized parental ratings in addition to teacher ratings. We will also investigate the use of multiple pathways of identification, and the addition of indicators for the identification of IG (intellectually gifted) and highly gifted students.

Goals:

- Remove EOG test scores as identification criteria and replace with a standardized achievement

indicator.

- Convert from the use of GRS (Gifted Rating Scales), which provides teacher evaluation only, to the use of SIGS (Scales for Identifying Gifted Students), which provides standardized ratings for both parent and teacher evaluations.
- Investigate and possibly establish multiple pathways of identification other than the use of the rubric.
- Investigate and include indicators/criteria for the identification of highly gifted students at all grade levels.
- Investigate and include indicators/criteria for the identification of IG (Intellectually Gifted) students at all grade levels.

Description:

A gifted program's identification procedures develop from its vision and should document the systematic approach used to find gifted students in the district. The instruments and assessments should be selected to closely match the services offered. The procedures should articulate who collects data and how data are analyzed and interpreted using appropriate tools, and also should reflect the characteristics of the student population and the local demographics. Procedures should be broad enough to include nominations of typically underrepresented students and free from potential bias. Procedures should ensure flexibility occurs when a student's profile necessitates alternative approaches.

The identification procedures for Mitchell County Schools utilize a comprehensive approach using multiple criteria and are effective at all grade levels. Our procedures support the vision of both our LEA and the AIG Program in that we believe students have unique and diverse needs, and we constantly strive to identify students whose talents and abilities necessitate the need for AIG Program services. Our identification procedures include both objective and subjective measures, using reliable and research-based standardized instruments as often as possible.

Our screening, referral, and identification procedures are as follows, in detail:

Formal identification of students begins in grade 4. The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has established a flow-chart timeline to summarize the screening, referral, and identification procedures. To facilitate the referral process, a screening pool of potential referrals is compiled from the administration of two screening tools to all 3rd and 5th grade students: 1) the NNAT2 (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test), which measures ability, and the CogAT Screener test, which measures verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal aptitude. These screener tests are administered to every student in these grades in the fall of the school year (usually mid-October). Student scores derived from either or both of these screener tests which are above average (above the 85th percentile for age or stanines 7-9) are included in the district-wide screening pool. Teachers are consulted for any additional nominations and nominations may also be accepted from students, peers, parents, or administrators.

Once parental consent is obtained to further evaluate, the collection of data is advanced by the AIG

Coordinator, with the cooperation of both the parents and the classroom teacher. Referred students are group-administered the full CogAT battery of tests, which are used in order to obtain more specific identification of student strengths in reading or math skills. This testing occurs in the spring, usually in mid-March or April. The school-based review team (consisting of the teachers, school administrator, and the AIG Coordinator) compiles the scores along with other criteria including parent and teacher rating scales, achievement data, classroom grades, and ability test results on the Mitchell County Schools Placement Rubric. At present, this rubric consists of four rating categories (Well Exceeds, Exceeds, Meets, or No Qualifications) in six criteria areas: Teacher Evaluation, Parent Survey, NNAT2 Ability Exams, CogAT Total Composite, Math Achievement (math class average, math EOG %ile, CogAT quantitative score) and Reading Achievement (reading class average, reading EOG %ile, CogAT verbal score). Students need to meet or exceed in at least 4 out of the 6 criteria areas to be considered for placement. This rubric helps to ensure that no one criterion excludes a child from AIG identification. Please refer to the Appendix of the Mitchell County Schools AIG Plan to view a copy of the Mitchell County School AIG Program Placement Rubric. Parents may also request the use of alternative assessments or individually administered testing by a licensed professional, however, the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program will not provide this testing and parents will be responsible for the cost of such testing. Students who do not meet the criteria for placement are placed in a file for re-evaluation in the near future. Such students may not be formally identified, but may be recommended for educational services or settings that can nurture their potential for future identification. Students who are highly gifted may also need to have a formal identification made in grades K-3. These students should be evaluated on an independent basis by the school-based review team. Mitchell County Schools AIG program is in the process of developing guidelines for the identification and placement of K-3 students, as well as service options for those students.

Additionally, the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program will be researching best practices for the identification of IG (Intellectually Gifted) students during the 2013 – 2016 plan cycle. Also considered will be service options available to meet those students' needs.

Mitchell County Schools AIG Program follows due process procedures for parental grievances or disagreements concerning student placement or services. Details about this process are available on the district AIG website, as well as disseminated with parent placement communications. A parent may request a copy of the DUE Process Procedures at any time from the AIG Coordinator. The Due Process Procedures are also described below:

1. The parent/guardian requests a conference with the school-based review team.
 - a. Parent/guardian may make a request for a conference with the team to discuss the concerns about the recommendation.
 - b. The team reviews student's records and their previous nomination, identification, and service option decision. The team may gather additional information about the student from teachers and or parent as needed.
 - c. The team grants the conference within 5 school days of the request and responds to the parent in writing within 5 school days of the conference.
2. The parent/guardian appeals the team's decision to the AIG Coordinator.
 - a. Parent/guardian may appeal the team's decision in writing to the AIG Coordinator within five days of receiving the written response from the team.
 - b. The AIG Coordinator reviews the grievance within 5 school days of the receipt of the appeal.

- c. The AIG Coordinator responds in writing to the outcome of the review within 10 school days.
3. The parent/guardian appeals to the Superintendent of MCS
 - a. The parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the AIG Coordinator to the superintendent within 5 school days of receiving the response.
 - b. The superintendent reviews the grievance within 5 school days from the receipt of the appeal.
 - c. The superintendent responds in writing concerning the outcome within 10 school days to the parent/guardian, AIG Coordinator, and principal of the given school.
4. The parent/guardian appeals to the MCS Board of Education.
 - a. A parent may appeal to the MCS Board of Education in writing within 10 school days following the written response from the superintendent.
 - b. The Board may offer a final decision within 30 days of written receipt.
5. The parent/guardian petitions the administrative law judge for a contested case hearing.
 - a. Parent/guardian may file a petition for a contested case hearing under ~Article3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.
 - b. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusions of law. Notwithstanding the provisions of ~Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decision of the judge becomes final, is binding on all involved parties, and is not subject to further review under ~Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Student AIG folders containing identification information.
- School-based review team meeting minutes and signatures.
- Flowchart/timeline for identification procedures and rubric form available for review.
- Handbook of identification procedures developed and reviewed annually with school personnel.
- Administered/accepted instruments list.
- Examples of parent or other referrals.
- Due Process Procedures available in a variety of sources at all times.
- All screening, referral, and identification procedures available to public in a variety of sources at all times.
- Policies/procedures established by AIG Coordinator/Advisory Council for early (K-3) identification and services, highly gifted students and services, and IG (Intellectually gifted) identification and services.
- Advisory council meetings and minutes.

Other Comments:

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:

Mitchell County Schools' demographics are unique in that it is a small, rural district with limited cultural diversity. Limited English Proficient students include approximately 5% of the student population. 16% of our student population is identified as exceptional (EC) students. The largest single demographic in our LEA is economically disadvantaged students, which comprised 59% of our average daily membership in 2011-2012. We intend to focus on these populations most closely to ensure our identification procedures are fair and equitable. Procedures for the identification and service of highly gifted students also need to be developed, as these students are found occasionally in our small district.

Goals:

- The Mitchell County Schools AIG program will strive to send intentional communications to traditionally underrepresented subgroups in our LEA regarding screening, referral, and identification procedures, translating such materials into native languages when possible.
- The AIG Program/Advisory Council will investigate the use of multiple pathways for identification during the 2013-2016 plan cycle.
- Additional measures to assist the identification of highly gifted students will be explored, such as above grade-level testing, and screening for the DUKE TIP (Talent Identification Program) for grades 4-5 and grade 7.
- The establishment of partnerships with EC, ELL, Title 1, and other administrators and/or teachers will be sought to determine the best methods to recognize and identify these students, including those students who may be twice-exceptional. These partnerships will include assistance with testing accommodations for students who have documented need on an individual basis.

Description:

The manner in which school districts identify and cultivate student gifts and talents often affects a student's emerging potential. A high-quality AIG program will seek strategies to modify identification procedures that contribute to the successful inclusion of students from typically underrepresented populations. One strategy is the use of a screening or talent pool in which all students are screened using standardized measurements. Mitchell County Schools, at present, uses two screener tests: 1) the NNAT2 (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test), which measures ability, and the CogAT Screener test, which measures verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal aptitude. The NNAT2 is a non-verbal ability (IQ) test, which has been effective in screening students in a non-biased manner in regard to culture and language ability. The CogAT Screener (and the full CogAT) allows for accommodations to be given to students with exceptionalities and ELL students. We plan to combine the screening with the use of multiple pathways of identification as we seek to develop those during the next plan cycle. Other strategies that can be helpful are the early identification of high-potential students along with the analysis of student performance information. The Mitchell County Schools AIG program will be investigating the use of the U-Stars~Plus Program in our K-3 classrooms. Project U-STARS refers to "Using Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students". The program supports teachers in the early recognition and nurturing of potential in children from economically disadvantaged and/or culturally/linguistically diverse families and children with disabilities in order to improve achievement and provide access to the advanced educational opportunities. The program can also be beneficial in identifying a highly gifted student from any demographic. Implementing this program will require purchase of the material that supports the program and professional development for these teachers

on an on-going basis. The AIG coordinator will be responsible for checking on the fidelity of the implementation, along with the principals at grades K-3.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- District-wide screening of all 3rd and 5th grade students using the NNAT2 (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test), which measures ability, and the CogAT Screener test, which measures verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal aptitude.
- Documentation of testing accommodations provided for students with IEP's or 504 plans.
- AIG child count data that includes analysis of the district's demographics.
- Copies of communications sent to subgroups or communications that have been translated into needed languages.
- Minutes from AIG Advisory Council meetings that document discussion of the establishment of multiple pathways for identification.
- Emails and notes from formal and/or informal meetings with other school personnel concerning input on identifying traditionally underrepresented populations.
- Purchase of U-Stars~Plus program, including documentation from staff development necessary for full implementation.
- Documentation of above-grade level testing, when necessary on an individual basis.
- DUKE TIP Talent Search screening records and participation records.

Other Comments:

Practice D

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

This practice is a Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program uses various strategies to ensure consistency throughout the entire implementation of its screening, referral, and identification process. Communication with stakeholders regarding the procedures and timeline are detailed and available on a continuous basis. The AIG Coordinator is the foremost person responsible for oversight within the LEA, along with the AIG Advisory Council, Central Office administrators, and the Mitchell County Schools Board of Education.

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

Description:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has a flowchart timeline for monitoring the uniformity of the identification process from one school year to the next. The consistency of these procedures is necessary to inform stakeholders as well as establish the need for gifted program services for the

LEA that match the students that are identified. A short synopsis is provided below:

- Mid-October: Screening tests are administered to all 3rd and 5th grade students district-wide.
- Late October to December: Analysis of screening scores provides a "screening pool" of referral candidates. Teachers are distributed lists of referrals and are allowed to add recommendations to the pool.
- January - March: Mailings are sent to parents for prior consent for further evaluation, also parent scales completed and returned; referral materials are sent to teachers for data compilation for students with parental consent returned.
- Mid - March to April: Further testing is administered; may include the full CogAT batteries and achievement testing; all data including testing is recorded on the placement rubric.
- April - June: School-based review teams meet.
- June - August: AIG Coordinator reviews team decisions; parents notified in writing of placement decisions.
- Mid – August: Teachers are notified of student placements for the coming school year; DEP's are compiled.
- September – October: Parent placement meetings are scheduled at each school annually to discuss the AIG program and services, provide parent review and input, and to provide team signatures on placement/DEP (Differentiated Education Plan) documents. The school-based review team will be available to meet on an individual basis for IDEP's (Individualized Differentiated Education Plan) and by parent request.
- Re-evaluations or other referrals during the school year will be handled on an individual basis and are not dependent upon the timeline; however, the same procedures will apply.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- School-based review team meeting minutes.
- AIG student files containing screening, referral, and identification and placement documents.
- District flowchart/timeline for guidance of identification process.
- Presentations, agendas, sign-in sheets from faculty meetings, parent meetings, etc.
- DEP's in student files providing a match of services for areas of exceptionalities identified.
- Data-tracking system (spreadsheets) for screening, referral, and identification for all students.
- Internal review of records annually.

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:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has written policies in place to safeguard the rights of AIG students and their parents/families, such as our screening, referral, and identification process and Due Process procedures. However, there is a need to include policies for other issues that may arise, such as procedures for transfers from other LEAs, changes in services or intervention plans, consultative services, and parental denial or withdrawal of services. Our program will be developing these additional policies during the 2013 – 2016 plan cycle.

Goals:

- Establish a policy for accepting students who transfer in to the LEA with an existing AIG identification from another LEA, both within NC and from out of state.
- Establish a policy for student performance review and a possible change in services or implementation of an intervention plan.
- Establish a policy and formal documents for parental denial of services or withdrawal from the program.
- Establish written guidelines governing consultative services (include in DEPs)
- Communicate all policies clearly and effectively to program stakeholders.
- All written policies need to be translated into native languages when necessary.

Description:

Comprehensive written policies are necessary to protect the rights of AIG students, their parents/families, and to provide accountability to the LEA and the AIG Program. Such policies include, but are not limited to the screening, referral, and identification process, Due Process procedures, procedures for transfers from other LEAs, changes in services or intervention plans, consultative services, and parental denial or withdrawal of services. It is essential that these policies are widely available to the public through a variety of formats and are translated into native languages when necessary.

Mitchell County Schools AIG program's screening, referral, and identification process and the Due Process procedure are described in detail in our plan under Standard 1, Practice B; they are also available to the public by a variety of other means.

During the 2013 – 2016 plan cycle, our goals include establishing other written policies and amending our submitted plan as needed, with local Board of Education approval.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Student AIG folders containing written consent for identification and services.
- Documentation of transfer placements or changes in services.
- Parent surveys that refer to knowledge of written policies
- Parent brochures, handbooks, or examples of mailings.
- District website with all written policies accessible.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) have always been part of the Mitchell County Schools AIG program. In the recent past, these plans were only updated during school transitions from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school. During the 2011 – 2013 plan cycle, our program changed to updating these plans yearly. Cooperating teachers (regular classroom) have had minimal involvement in the DEP process and little accountability for the implementation of the DEP. The adoption of one or more methods of delivery for gifted services district-wide, perhaps at each school level, would support further development and improvement of our DEP process. Our program has historically not had high school/early college DEPs to guide student gifted program services throughout high school/early college. During the next plan cycle, we will be implementing DEPs at the high school level.

Goals:

- Adoption by the AIG Program (with input from stakeholders, the AIG Advisory Council, and the AIG Coordinator) of one or more methods of service delivery at each grade level span district-wide, such as cluster-grouping, to facilitate DEP development.
- School-based meetings with all cooperating teachers to develop DEPs early in school year, with a specific timeline for completion.
- Begin high school/early college DEPs (4-year plan) with input from each student and guidance counselors, to be updated yearly.
- Implement a method(s) of service delivery district-wide, such as cluster-grouping, to increase program fidelity and accountability.

Description:

A Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) provides an outline of service delivery options for a particular student, matched to that student's needs and strengths. It should detail the types of services offered (both direct and indirect), indicate where or in what setting these services will be provided, and specify when the services are provided and with what frequency they will occur.

The basis of services offered should depend on one or more established models of delivery that are researched-based and include best practices in gifted education. The DEP plan should outline the services best suited to the chosen model. While DEPs can include a checklist of services, these need to be examined for each student on an individual basis.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Student files containing DEPs/IDEPs and documentation of any intervention plans or change in

8/8/2013

services signed by school-based review team and parent.

- Copies of mailings or other communications with parents
- Annual parent review meetings agendas, minutes, notes, sign-in sheets.
- Parent and student surveys.
- Documentation of AIG program involvement in high school registration.
- Documentation of DEP monitoring by AIG Coordinator and cooperating teachers at all levels.

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:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program must focus more directly and deliberately upon differentiated curriculum and instruction for its gifted learners at all grade levels, but especially at the elementary and middle grade levels. AIG students at the elementary level (grades 4-5) are typically not presented a differentiated curriculum other than leveled reading groups; therefore, math differentiation is a weakness. At the middle school level, one of the two schools presently does not group gifted students together except for 8th grade math to provide Algebra 1. The other middle school groups by ability in language and math, but the curriculum is not always adapted in other subject classes to meet student needs. High school level students are offered honors and AP courses, but little differentiation takes place in their other classes. These assertions were also voiced by some parents and students during surveys completed during the 2012 – 2013 school year.

Goals:

- Expand enrichment opportunities available to all students.
- Encourage consistency within the district regarding service delivery and grouping methods.
- Utilize the AIG~IRP (Instructional Resources Project) provided through NCDPI to guide and support teachers working with gifted learners.
- Provide professional development for all teachers on the AIG~IRP.
- Provide and develop curriculum guides/maps for materials used with gifted learners.
- Provide coaching and instructional support for teachers, provided by the AIG Coordinator or other AIG-qualified teachers.
- Ensure that Honors Courses at the high school level are significantly differentiated from the standard curriculum, following the Honors Level Course Rubric.

Description:

The Standard Course of Study (Common Core and Essential Standards) can be used as an entry point for differentiation; however, high student achievement among gifted students is more likely to take place among a high-quality curriculum that contains ever-increasing levels of challenge. This differentiation should begin at an early age (K-3), even before students are formally identified, to help develop students' potential. Differentiation of standard curriculum for gifted students should occur at all grade levels, including high school level courses. The State Board of Education approved the new Honors Level Course Rubric in June 2012. This rubric will be the foundation for courses developed at the honors level and will ensure fidelity across the state. The new Honors Level Course Rubric (2012)

will be used in the development process of honors courses at the LEA level as well as guide the state level Honors Level Course Portfolio Review Process. Our high school teachers need to be aware of these guidelines to ensure that all courses that carry the "Honors" classification are:

1.) more challenging than standard level courses in order to foster growth for advanced learners, and

2.) distinguished by a difference in the depth and scope of work required.

Honors level courses should not be distinguished only by the amount of work students must complete. Even at this level of rigor, it must be recognized that both Honors and AP (Advanced Placement) courses are not in themselves differentiation for gifted learners, and some learners' unique needs will dictate differentiation beyond that of the Honors or AP course. High school teachers in other classes are to be expected to take into account the advanced learner's needs as well.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Student DEPs, IDEPs, etc. on file.
- Records of student and personnel participation in enrichment activities.
- Student/Parent/Faculty survey results.
- Sample artifacts from teacher units, plans, etc. that have used resources from the AIG-IRP.
- Sample student work projects and assignments.
- Agendas, sign-in sheets from professional development sessions and training notes.
- Copies of curriculum maps or pacing guides developed.
- Honors teachers' course framework portfolio.
- Advanced Placement teachers' syllabi.
- Examples of "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy used for students' benefit.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Historically, Mitchell County teachers have been offered minimal training in differentiation. This training, however, was not offered as an attempt to implement a district-wide program and no support was given for classroom implementation. Since only two teachers in our LEA have had any formal university training in gifted education, our program must rely heavily upon professional development at the local level to train teachers on how to implement differentiated instruction. The general education teacher, who may have a wide range of ability levels to address in one class, as well as multiple subject preparations, delivers the majority of our gifted services at the elementary level. Currently, teachers are using a wide variety of methods to differentiate instruction, and neither the district nor individual schools adhere to any particular curriculum or instructional model to help guide instruction. The AIG Advisory Council will be looking at models that seem to fit our LEA's initiatives and mission over the next plan cycle to arrive at a unified model or combination of models for our

program. Also, there is no comprehensive district-wide policy on acceleration and its use with gifted students, and the Advisory Council will be working with administrators to support these advanced learners. Additionally, the State Board of Education Policy of "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" will assist with acceleration, and we need to include the use of this policy when warranted for particular students.

Goals:

- Adopt one or more curriculum models district-wide to aid consistency and to help guide differentiation practices.
- Provide targeted professional development for teachers of advanced learners on how to differentiate instruction.
- Provide teachers with resources to use during planning.
- Establish district-wide policy and procedures on acceleration (whole grade, subject, and within class).
- Integrate the State Board of Education's "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy into existing policies and procedures.

Description:

Currently, teachers in our LEA use a variety of processes and strategies to provide depth, complexity, and rigor into the learning experience for gifted learners. This is achieved in modification of content, process, product, learning environment, or a combination of these options. Some include but are not limited to: Problem-based learning, Socratic seminars/ Paideia seminars/Shared Inquiry discussions, tiered lessons, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, or extension and enrichment activities. The use of a similar curriculum and instructional model would assist in the consistency of services across the district and also guide the professional development offered to teachers. The teachers must also be provided with sufficient resources to assist them in the implementation of the particular model(s). Acceleration options should also be employed to fully address the needs of highly gifted students, and a district-wide policy developed to guide the process.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Targeted staff development in the area of differentiation: agendas, sign-in sheets, presentations, and teacher products.
- The adoption of one or more curriculum models district-wide to aid consistency and to help guide differentiation practices.
- Written copy of a district acceleration policy.
- The integration of the State Board of Education's "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy into existing policies and procedures.
- Budget expenditures for differentiated curriculum materials.
- Budget expenditures for professional development on differentiated instruction.

Other Comments:

Practice C

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The adoption and use of researched-base supplemental resources in the classrooms where gifted learners are served was first addressed in the 2010 – 2013 plan cycle. Traditionally, teachers have been expected to acquire their own supplemental resources, or use enrichment resources provided through textbook adoptions. The Mitchell County Schools AIG program has provided small classroom supplements during the past plan cycle to allow teachers to purchase materials to aid in differentiation of the curriculum. These funds were provided to the teachers who had significant contact with gifted learners in classes such as high-ability reading in elementary, high-ability math and reading in middle school, honors and AP teachers in high The Mayland Early College also receives textbook support from the AIG Program. We would like to focus more on getting similar programs with a research-base for gifted learners into the schools on a consistent basis.

Goals:

- Find and select research-based supplemental sources for math differentiation in elementary and middle school classrooms.
- Intentional programming for K-3 to develop and identify student potential using research-based resources such as U-STARs~Plus.
- Expand the use of William and Mary Language Arts Units to all elementary and middle schools.
- Expand the use of the Junior Great Books Reading Program to all elementary and middle schools.
- Explore future expansion of research-based supplemental resources for other core academic areas such as science and social studies.

Description:

While the addition of any supplemental resources in the classroom will assist the teacher in adapting the curriculum to meet student needs, this offers little in terms of program and district-wide consistency. The adoption and application of supplemental resources that present advanced concepts through models and frameworks, which have been developed for use with high-ability learners, offers our teachers a dependable and cohesive approach for addressing the instruction and assessment of gifted learners. Using similar materials district-wide also simplifies budgeting, and the implementation of the resources can be accompanied by meaningful and focused professional development.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Records of supplemental materials purchased with AIG funds.
- Research on file that supports the use of particular supplemental materials with the gifted student population.
- Sample units, lessons, and activities, plans, or evidence of delivery.
- Student work products.
- DEPs/IDEPs on file.

- Pacing guides, curriculum maps and frameworks.
- Agendas, sign-in sheets, etc., from professional development sessions during implementation.
- Records of follow-up fidelity checks of the use of resources in classrooms.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Mitchell High School instigated the One-to-One initiative in the 2010-2011 school year, which utilized a grant to provide laptop computers to all students for their use at school and at home. While this is an extremely valuable part of preparing our students for a future as part of a global society, there are other skills and knowledge that are an integral part of that success. We have some programs currently in place that allow our students to apply learning in a real-life context. The Graduation Project is a culminating senior activity that encourages high school students to explore a career scenario by applying many of these skills. Clubs such as the Key Club at the high school level, and the Jr. Beta Club at the middle school level, incorporate service learning. Our program feels the need to focus upon not only technology skills, but also ways that these skills can be utilized to enrich and enhance authentic experiences. These experiences need to be infused at all grade levels, not just the secondary level.

Goals:

- Integrate technology in classroom instruction within a real-world context.
- Seek out ways to provide authentic learning and assessment opportunities, both in the classroom and through enrichment and extension activities.

Description:

The development of 21st century content and skills provides a framework that is intended to communicate knowledge, skills, and understanding at an advanced content level to enable students to experience success as global citizens. Students must learn and apply skills such as higher-order thinking, critical reasoning, creative production, problem-finding and solving, and decision-making. They need to master communication and collaboration skills, as well as use effective information, media, and technology strategies. While technology is an integral part of the implementation of this knowledge, it is a learning tool and needs to be integrated with the curriculum in meaningful ways.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Evidence of technology integration into advanced classwork, such as lesson plans and student products.
- Student participation in service learning opportunities: Clubs such as Beta Club and Key Club, mentorships, etc.
- Student participation in academic enrichment and extension opportunities offered such as Odyssey of the Mind, Lego Robotics, National History Day, etc.

Other Comments:

Practice E

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

All of Mitchell County Schools' students are assessed by quarterly benchmark testing using the Classscape online assessment tool, and annually by state required End of Grade/End of Course testing. This will also include future Measures of Student Learning (MSLs)/Common Exams. The Mitchell County Schools AIG program has no formal record of any local analysis of the subgroup of scores including gifted students, and needs to focus on this practice as part of our program evaluations.

The Mitchell County Schools district is still in the beginning implementation stage of RTI (Response to Instruction). It is a goal of the system to apply progress monitoring to all students, but regular education teachers are responsible for this monitoring for gifted students, and RTI teams are not yet in place in all schools. Consistency is needed before this type of assessment can be applied to our gifted students.

Our AIG program intends to investigate how the recently passed State Board of Education policy, "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" can help inform acceleration decisions at the middle and high school level for applicable students.

Goals:

- Document the use of a balanced assessment approach that includes diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment data of individual gifted students to inform instruction.
- Use assessments to determine subject acceleration in courses such as reading and language arts, math, etc.).
- Implement a "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy to help inform acceleration decisions at the middle and high school level for applicable students.
- Include gifted students' growth as part of the RTI implementation in the district.
- Conduct local analyses of gifted students' assessment data in the LEA each school year to inform program evaluation.

Description:

All teachers in the Mitchell County Schools district were required to complete the NC FALCON

training and are familiar with the assessment process. Classroom assessments should be matched to curriculum objectives, and performance-based tasks and portfolio approaches are also encouraged and effective. Most of our district's teachers have also received RTI training and are familiar with the practice of progress monitoring for all students. On a program-wide scale, continually analyzing student assessment data for gifted students throughout the district assists the AIG program in matching service delivery options to overall student needs. All of these types of assessment are necessary to successfully drive differentiation for gifted students, both on an individual, classroom, and program-wide basis.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Records of yearly data analysis as part of program evaluation.
- RTI team meeting notes.
- Documentation of the use of assessments to inform acceleration decisions.
- Examples of the use of the "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy to benefit students.

Other Comments:

Practice F

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Being that the population in the Mitchell County Schools district is small and mostly rural, teachers in the system generally have awareness of the need and a desire to meet the social and emotional needs of all of their students. This applies to the gifted students in their classrooms as well. The best teacher, however, needs professional training and assistance in order to meet those needs. Some teachers have had brief introductions to the affective needs of gifted students, but there remains a great need in our district for all teachers who serve gifted students to receive training in this area as part of meeting local requirements. Our school guidance counselors also need specialized training to understand their role in working with these students.

Goals:

- Intentional and meaningful use of curriculum units and lessons that address the social/emotional needs of gifted students by both guidance counselors and applicable classroom teachers.
- Intervention plans or IDEPs (Individual Differentiated Education Plans) developed for gifted students with social/emotional concerns or at-risk behaviors by school-based review teams.
- Establish school guidance counselor-led groups for gifted students.
- Provide individual guidance from school counselors for gifted students on an as-needed basis.
- Intervention plans or IDEPs developed for students with exceptional social or emotional needs.
- Provide professional development for district educators on the social/emotional needs of gifted students.
- Provide targeted professional development for school guidance counselors on the social/emotional needs of gifted students.

Description:

Gifted students, as a population, encounter a number of unique issues and concerns that affect their social/emotional well being. Classroom teachers offer the first line of service to the gifted student in this realm, and can serve their gifted students' needs in various ways that are integrated with curriculum units, some examples being bibliotherapy or videotherapy. School guidance counselors are in a unique position to help bridge the work of teachers, other educators, and parents in best meeting the student's individual needs. The counselor can help gifted students understand and cope with their unique intellectual and social/emotional needs during various phases of their development. They can help to create a supportive environment by serving as a student advocate and a link between other professionals serving that particular student.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Guidance counselor/AIG Coordinator and/or school review team interventions documented in individual student folders.
- Guidance counselor lesson plans and records of service.
- Classroom teacher lesson plans, unit of study, etc. that address the affective domain of gifted students.
- Intervention plans or IDEPs for particular students if needed.
- Agendas, sign-in sheets, etc. from professional development targeted to guidance counselors and other educators concerning the social/emotional needs of gifted students.

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:

Currently, the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program does not have a formal strategy in place to offer enrichment-based differentiated curriculum and instruction for the purpose of recognizing students at early ages with high ability and advanced learning potential. Students in grades 1, 2, and 3 attend ability-grouped reading classes. These groups are flexible and the children are progress-monitored on a periodic and consistent basis. Our program attempted to implement Renzulli Learning Online before and during the 2010-2013 plan cycle. A local action research project was conducted during the 3rd year of implementation to assess its effectiveness as a tool for facilitating enrichment and cultivating potential. Findings indicated that it was under-utilized and therefore not cost effective. Our program would like to focus on a research-based initiative to develop and cultivate the potential of younger students, such as U-Stars~Plus.

Goals:

- Continued support of leveled reading groups in the primary grades.
- Establishment of a K-3 curriculum enrichment initiative to develop and cultivate the potential of

younger students, such as U-Stars~Plus.

- Purchase of program materials and offer professional development to K-3 teachers and administrators district-wide for program implementation and follow-up.

Description:

Our past attempt in the district to offer a formal "nurturing" program was the contracting of Renzulli Learning Online. However, after a few years of under-utilization, the program was dropped in 2012 because of exorbitant cost and very little benefit perceived by stakeholders. Since our district did not implement the Renzulli Schoolwide Enrichment Model, having this product in isolation did not make sense, nor was it cost effective. We are considering instead implementing U-Stars~Plus (Using Science, Talents, and Abilities to Recognize Students ~ Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students). This is a curriculum framework that uses science and literature instruction to focus on young children's strengths and provide them challenge. This challenge extends outside the classroom into the family realm as well. Teachers are trained to use the "TOPS" Folders to assist with recording observations and recognize students who show exceptional potential and who may be gifted, while at the same time nurturing all students. It is especially useful for discerning which of these students may be culturally/linguistically diverse, children of poverty, or children with disabilities.

In addition to this new initiative, our focus is also to continue to support early reading and eventually math success in the primary grades by supporting flexible grouping in grades 1-3.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Sustained purchase of U-Stars~Plus program materials, budgetary resources.
- Initial professional development and follow-up with teachers by the AIG Program.
- Teacher lesson plans and TOPS Folders.
- Administrator observations and fidelity check records.

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:

Planning time at all grades levels in our school district is a valuable commodity. It is difficult with the current structure of most of our schools to find time for collaboration. With our gifted population of students almost exclusively served by general education teachers, the greatest focus of collaboration is needed between these teachers and the exceptional children and ESL teachers. Also, the assistance of special curriculum teachers and the guidance counselors is needed to fully integrate all areas of service.

Goals:

- Gather resources and provide professional development for all teachers on how the NCSOS/Common Core and Essential Standards intersect with gifted education practices.
- Investigate ways to establish formal means of team collaboration among all educators to develop and implement differentiated curriculum and instruction for gifted learners.

Description:

The Core Beliefs and Values statement of the Mitchell County Schools system 2011-2016 Strategic Plan in the area of Collaboration/Accountability states: "We hold ourselves accountable for building relationships that expand opportunities for students". This indicates that administrators should encourage sustained, consistent collaboration in which general classroom teachers and other who work with gifted students in each school can plan together, observe one another's classrooms, and reflect on how they, as a team, can best serve students who have both specialized needs and may be twice-exceptional. The implementation of RTI (Responsiveness to Instruction) in our district would be supportive of this process.

Learning experiences for all students should address the learners' needs through interest, readiness, levels of support and degree of challenge. The AIG Program, through the AIG Coordinator, can be available as a support system for general educators attempting to implement best practices for meeting the needs of the gifted, through continued research and providing resource materials. In addition, the AIG Coordinator can lend expertise and leadership in the implementation of these components and arrange or provide appropriate professional development for general education teachers.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Information shared yearly with general education teachers and specialists in regards to students they serve who qualify as twice-exceptional.
- Resources shared in professional development for all teachers on how the NCSOS/Common Core and Essential Standards intersect with gifted education practices; agendas, sign-in sheets.
- Establishment of formal collaboration teams at each school (perhaps RTI) to determine the best manner to develop and implement differentiated curriculum and instruction for gifted learners; meeting notes, sign-in sheets.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

During the last plan cycle (2010 - 2013), students in grades 4-8 have had a DEP (Differentiated Education Plan) updated and signed by teachers, principals, and parents annually. In past years, a DEP was developed and updated only three times: placement, the transition to middle school, and

the transition to high school. The creation of a high school DEP was not a priority of past programs due to lack of parent involvement. During the 2013 - 2016 plan cycle, our program will focus upon the high school DEP process, integrating them with their 4-year plan for graduation, beginning in the 8th grade year. While in the last plan cycle our program made significant improvements in our DEP process, we have several goals for improving the creation and sharing of these documents to make it a more meaningful process for teachers, parents, and students.

Goals:

- DEP meetings with parents for initial placements on a one-to-one basis.
- IDEPs for K-3 students who show demonstrated need for early significant differentiation.
- Establish a DEP process for high school students that incorporate their 4-year course plans.
- Include the DEP plan in RTI team meetings.

Description:

Presently, the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program asks teachers to collaboratively develop a DEP plan at each grade level for each student that is formally identified. This plan describes the differentiated curriculum and services that a student will receive that school year. These plans are discussed and signed at yearly AIG group parent meetings at each school, with parents having access for individual meetings if requested. With the AIG coordinator serving the only AIG specialist, it is difficult to conduct individual DEP meetings for every student that is served by our program. An improvement in this process will be the goal of conducting one-on-one meetings with parents for initial placement, which will be facilitated by including AIG in the RTI team process, when fully established in our district.

IDEPs (Individualized Differentiated Education Plans) will be developed when a student show a demonstrated need for substantial differentiation, such as a highly gifted student at any grade level. Also, while we have developed IDEPs for students in grades 3-8 before, we now intend to develop a policy to identify students in grades K-3 who demonstrate need for early significant differentiation, when necessary and on an individual basis. We will not begin screening pools, however, until the end of third grade.

The non-negotiable goal that we have established is the reinstating of DEPs at the high-school level. We will be developing a template for a DEP for grades 9-12 that integrates their 4-year plan of coursework. This will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to reflect any changes necessary during an annual parent meeting. The AIG Coordinator or a program representative will also be present at registration functions. A counselor will be used to assist with career cluster decisions and other issues.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- DEPs developed for all identified students grades 4-12, updated by teachers annually; signed copies given to parent and placed in students' AIG folder.
- IDEPs developed for students with documented need at any grade level.
- RTI team meeting agendas and notes.
- DEP signed at one-to-one meetings for initially placed students.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Mitchell County Schools AIG Program currently has a coordinator who is AIG-licensed and holds a master's degree in Gifted Education. The system, at present, employs only one AIG Coordinator/Specialist to guide, plan, develop, implement, revise, and monitor the local AIG program and local plan. This Coordinator is also responsible for a full-time self-contained elementary classroom teaching position. There is a need for the Coordinator to have sufficient supervisory time to monitor and implement the local plan to meet standards. This position should be employed on a full-time basis, free from teaching duties, to allow for the fullest implementation of the AIG plan, and that funds be allocated to maintain this position on a continual basis.

Goals:

- Employ an AIG-licensed coordinator on a full-time basis, free from teaching duties.
- Establish a job description for the AIG Coordinator position.

Description:

An effective coordinator of a gifted program must satisfy particular responsibilities, knowledge, and competencies in order to effectively administer the program. Following is a job description of the AIG Coordinator for Mitchell County Schools, not necessarily all-inclusive:

Identification/Placement:

1. Develops an identification process that assures an individual body of evidence for potentially gifted students knowledge and abilities as required by state standards and legislation and State Board of Education Policy.
2. Selects assessments that include multiple sources of information about students.
3. Monitors the identification procedures and process to ensure fidelity.
4. Maintains an accurate program headcount and submits headcount to state authorities by required deadlines.

Programming/Curriculum/Instruction:

1. Plans and implements the district-wide programs and services for K-12 gifted learners that are specifically designed for the identified needs of the local population, in accordance with state standards and legislation and State Board of Education Policy, which has been approved by the LEAs school board.

2. Observes and evaluates the programs activities.
3. Designs programs in consultation with experts in the field based on research and "best practices".
4. Assesses the overall effectiveness of the program.
5. Initiates and directs improvements in the program.
6. Develops and solicits approval for policies including early entrance, acceleration, grouping, dual enrollment, and curriculum modification.
7. Collaborates with counselors to develop a comprehensive guidance program that addresses the unique social/emotional needs of gifted learners, as well as assistance with academic planning and vocational and career awareness.
8. Provides communications that include orientations and workshops that inform all stakeholders of program services and policies, as well as the academic and social/emotional needs of gifted learners.

Personnel/Staff Development:

1. Acts as a liaison between the Central Office administrative staff and local school staffs, state, and regional administration.
2. Articulates the roles and responsibilities of all personnel working with gifted learners.
3. Develops procedures for the selection of teachers that work with gifted learners that includes placement in classrooms where teachers have met local requirements for that position or have earned an AIG add-on license.
4. Determines needs and develops a comprehensive ongoing professional development plan for all personnel that work with gifted learners.
5. Maintains accurate records of personnel regarding gifted licensure and/or local requirements.
6. Facilitates implementation of staff development activities.
7. Evaluates and reports staff development activities to appropriate personnel.
8. Provides leadership for appropriate personnel.

Administrative Duties/Public Relations:

1. Provides leadership in the administration of the AIG program, and implements the plan for K-12 gifted learners in accordance with state standards and legislation and State Board of Education Policy, which has been approved by the LEAs school board.
2. Ensures that necessary administrative procedures are maintained.
3. Participates actively in regional meetings, personal professional development opportunities, and other state initiatives to support gifted programs.
4. Locates and facilitates the special and related services which support the program.
5. Establishes and leads an AIG Advisory Council that includes representatives from all stakeholder groups.
6. Evaluates the program on an on-going basis, both formally and informally.
7. Reports to stakeholders on an annual basis regarding program evaluation and activities and the progress of gifted students in the program, using data and information from all stakeholders to make or suggest changes in learning environments.

Fiscal Management:

1. Uses cost effective procedures in fiscal management.
2. Establishes and maintains control of financial resources specific to the continuum of services provided by the program.
3. Develops and administers a defensible budget that adheres to federal/state/local policies, while allowing for full implementation of the local AIG program plan.
4. Consults with the superintendent and finance officer on fiscal matters.

5. Participates in program audits and shares budget information with relevant stakeholders.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Employment of an AIG-licensed coordinator on a full-time basis, free from teaching duties; funds encumbered for such employment on an annual basis.
- Establishment of a written job description for the AIG Coordinator position.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Presently, our AIG program does not have sufficient funding to employ either full or part-time gifted AIG-licensed specialist positions for service delivery to our gifted learners. We must rely on general education teachers and counselors at all grade levels from K-12 to differentiate the curriculum and meet the needs of these students. There are no particular service delivery models that our program follows, nor method of monitoring for fidelity of implementation, which leads to inconsistent and fragmented services across the district. Parent surveys conducted during the 2012 - 2013 school year indicate frustration among parents concerning inconsistencies among our districts' schools. Our focus will be to develop and implement district-wide service delivery model(s) for all students grades K-12.

Goals:

- Provide clear and comprehensive descriptions for the role of general education teachers who serve gifted learners.
- Establish local professional development requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators.
- Place AIG students in classrooms with teachers who have met the LEA's local requirements for that position or have earned AIG-licensure (see Standard 3, Practice D).

Description:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG program and the AIG Advisory Council is constantly investigating and evaluating models of service delivery that will best serve the needs of our gifted population. In the past, we have offered professional development to teachers, mostly in the area of curriculum differentiation, and have depended on the administration and faculty of each school to determine the best means of delivery at each site. This has resulted in fragmented services and a negative public perception of the local AIG program in general.

One of the most promising service delivery models that our district has investigated is the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model: SCGM (Winebrenner, S., & Brulles, D., 2008a). This model designs a setting for providing differentiated instruction that is practical for general education teachers and increases

the probability that differentiation will be initiated and achieved, which results in greater potential for academic achievement and growth of gifted students (Brulles, 2005; Gentry, 1999; Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008b). This method of service delivery is essentially a grouping model, reducing the range of abilities in a particular classroom that a teacher must address. Students are placed in gifted cluster classrooms with teachers who have met the district's requirements for working with gifted learners. The advantage of implementing this method of service delivery would be a greater potential of growth for gifted learners, requiring relatively little additional expenditure for additional personnel once implemented fully.

Cited Sources:

Brulles, D. (2005). An examination and critical analysis of cluster grouping gifted students in an elementary school district (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ.

Gentry, M. L. (1999). Promoting student achievement and exemplary classroom practices through clustered grouping: A researchbased alternative to heterogeneous elementary classrooms. Storrs: University of Connecticut, The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

Winebrenner, S., & Brulles, D. (2008a). The schoolwide cluster grouping model (SCGM). Gifted Education Press Quarterly, 22(2), 2–6.

Winebrenner, S., & Brulles, D. (2008b). The cluster grouping handbook: A schoolwide model. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Written descriptions of roles for general education teachers who serve gifted learners, shared annually district-wide.
- Written local professional development requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators.
- AIG coordinator's records of personnel who have met local AIG program professional development requirements or have earned AIG-licensure.
- Documentation of AIG student placements with personnel who have met local AIG program professional development requirements or have earned AIG-licensure.
- Implementation of a district-wide service delivery model(s).
- Agendas and sign-in sheets from professional development on program service delivery models.
- Notes and documentation from AIG coordinator fidelity checks on implementation of program service delivery model(s).

Other Comments:

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:

Professional development provided by the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program in past years has largely consisted of occasional workshops concentrated upon the characteristics of gifted learners or methods of curriculum differentiation. Records are kept of attendance at these workshops, and occasionally CEU credits are given to attendees. Nonetheless, our AIG program does not have specific local professional development requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators that have not obtained official state AIG-licensure in place at the present time.

Goals:

- Develop and communicate clear expectations district-wide for all roles regarding AIG personnel qualifications.
- Establish specific local professional development requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators that have not obtained official state AIG-licensure.
- Provide a specific scope and sequence of local coursework designed to meet the local professional development requirements.
- Development of local coursework components or modules.

Description:

Direct services to identified AIG students are best provided by staff who have AIG licensure, which is obtained through the university pathway. The NCDPI no longer officially recognizes "local endorsement" as a means of licensure. In lieu of staff who have not received this licensure, our LEA needs to have in place a specific scope and sequence of coursework that meet our AIG program's local requirements for requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators, including all grade levels K-12. Once established, this initiative also needs to be followed with on-going support, perhaps through district professional learning communities.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Development of specific local professional development requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators that have not obtained official state AIG-licensure.
- LEA communications with personnel concerning staff requirements.
- Written specific scope and sequence of local coursework designed to meet the local professional development requirements.
- Agendas and sign-in sheets from professional development; budgetary resources and expenditures.
- AIG coordinator's records of personnel who have met local AIG program professional development

requirements or have earned AIG-licensure.

- Documentation of AIG student placements with personnel who have met local AIG program professional development requirements or have earned AIG-licensure.

Other Comments:

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:

Neither the Mitchell County Schools LEA nor the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program currently has a plan or policy in place that addresses the placement of its identified AIG students in any particular manner. The grouping of students, and the placement of those students with particular personnel, is managed at each individual school by the principal and is not consistent district-wide. Some deliberate placement is occurring at the elementary and middle school levels where part-time flexible grouping of students by ability is managed within the school schedule. Our program needs to focus on this practice and other related practices to ensure the optimal placement for the growth of the LEA's gifted student population.

Goals:

- Provide clear and comprehensive descriptions for the role of general education teachers who serve gifted learners.
- Establish local professional development requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators.
- Place AIG students in classrooms with teachers who have met the LEA's local requirements for that position or have earned AIG-licensure.

Description:

The intentional placement of gifted students with qualified personnel must be a consideration that is supported with the adoption and implementation of a service delivery model that is consistent across the district. School-wide cluster grouping offers the best and most cost-effective model for accomplishing this goal. Fidelity of the model must be maintained to derive maximum benefits to the students. A clear process for student placements in classrooms with qualified teachers also requires the integration of other best practices in gifted education as well, such as professional requirements for all personnel who work with gifted students. There should be a partnership between the AIG Coordinator and school-based administrators to ensure effective AIG student placement.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Written district-wide policy for intentional placement of gifted students; documentation of partnership and planning with school-based administrators.

- Records of student placements on DEPs and/or class rosters.
- AIG Coordinator and district personnel records.

Other Comments:

Practice E

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Professional development supported and offered through the Mitchell County Schools AIG program has been largely opportunity-based and determined by immediate needs. Focusing on this practice involves staying abreast of LEA initiatives, assessing present and future needs of the AIG program, and aligning program and personnel needs with the needs of the district as a whole. This will involve advance planning and collaboration between the AIG Coordinator and other district administrators.

Goals:

- Alignment of AIG Program professional development offerings with LEA and individual school-based improvement and strategic plans.
- Conduct an annual needs-assessment of AIG Program professional development needs as a part of continual program evaluation.
- Establish specific local professional development requirements for teachers and other personnel who are involved in providing AIG programs and services, including classroom teachers, exceptional children personnel, counselors, and school administrators that have not obtained official state AIG-licensure.
- Provide a specific scope and sequence of local coursework designed to meet the local professional development requirements.
- Development of local coursework components.

Description:

Professional development opportunities offered by the AIG program should be aligned to the AIG Program goals, while at the same time aligning with other district initiatives when possible. A goal of the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program during the 2013 – 2016 plan cycle is to implement a district-wide service delivery model such as cluster grouping. To implement this model, professional development would be offered to all teachers, but targeted to teachers willing to implement documented differentiation in a cluster classroom. Another goal of our program in the coming plan cycle is to develop specific coursework that will satisfy local requirements for working with gifted students and also encourage teachers to obtain gifted licensure add-ons. Both of these goals are also significant in relation to our district's goals and vision.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- AIG Coordinator participation on LEA planning teams and committees.
- Agendas, sign-in sheets, etc. of professional development opportunities that are aligned with both AIG program and district initiatives.

- Personnel survey results outlining needs assessment for professional development.

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:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program makes every effort to relate the professional development it provides locally to national (National Association for Gifted Children/Council for Exceptional Children) and state (North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented) standards, as well as best practices in gifted education. Whenever possible, professional development includes instruction in methods and models that stress 21st century skills such as use of technology. Several teachers, who are also members of the AIG Advisory Council, regularly attend the state gifted conference. Our LEA also regularly participates in professional development offered regionally at our Western Regional Education Service Alliance (WRESA).

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

Description:

Membership in professional organizations provides educators with access to networks of other educators and experts in the field, publications, and other resources. Attendance at the state gifted conference allows attendees to stay abreast of the latest research and best practices for working with gifted learners, while networking and advocating for gifted education with others in the field. WRESA trainings allow local access to quality staff development that meets the need of gifted programs in our region.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Documented alignment with NAGC/CEC professional development standards, NC teaching standards, and NC AIG licensure standards.
- Membership in national and state professional organizations.
- Records of attendance at the NCAGT (North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented) Conference.
- Documentation of session presentations at conferences.
- Documentation of local staff development provided by teachers who have attended "Train the Trainer" sessions in our region.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Our LEA is located in a small, but rural district, which makes it inconvenient to meet face-to-face on a frequent basis. Our AIG program is investigating the use of technology resources to assist in collaboration and sharing of resources with other professionals and teachers of gifted learners. Within local professional development offerings, we will also be building in various means of sharing personal reflections and collaborating with other local educators.

Goals:

- Facilitate collaboration among personnel that work with gifted learners, connected with recent professional development.
- Establish virtual professional learning communities (PLCs) for personnel that work with gifted learners that communicate on a regular basis.

Description:

In today's technology driven world, there are a myriad of resources that educators can utilize for self-reflection and collaboration. Even in rural districts, teachers can connect to others locally and beyond to share thoughts, ideas, lessons, and resources. Staff development can be conducted online, in a hybrid environment (a combination of face-to-face and online), or technology can be used to connect with others to apply and improve applications of previous professional learning. Mitchell County Schools AIG Program will be exploring the use of various online resources for making these connections.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Documented meeting notes, agendas, sign-in sheets for face-to-face meetings.
- Screenshots, printed transcripts, and other evidences of online collaboration.
- Examples of resources developed 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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program and the LEA as a whole has, in the past, operated mostly on the premise that services are needed only after a student is identified and differentiation and services are covered by student choice of Honors and Advanced Placement Courses at the high school level. During the 2013 - 2016 plan cycle, our program will focus upon the high school DEP process, integrating them with their 4-year plan for graduation, beginning in the 8th grade year. We also see the need to intensively train high school teachers in differentiation strategies. This training will also need to focus on K-3 teachers as we attempt to launch a formal program in these grade levels to develop the skills of younger students who show potential.

Goals:

- Launch a formal "nurturing" program in grades K-3.
- Establish DEPs for high school students that integrate with their 4-year plan for graduation.
- Concentrate professional development in differentiation for all teachers, especially at the K-3 and high school grade levels.

Description:

The current school structure in our LEA consists of one primary school, two elementary schools, two middle schools, a traditional high school, and an early college high school. Established services provided to advanced and gifted learners begin in fourth grade when students are formally identified. The regular education teacher serves students in heterogeneous classrooms. At the elementary level, one school currently loosely groups students for math and reading instruction, and teachers serve all students within a grade level in one or two subjects. Another elementary school loosely groups students for reading only, and one teacher at each grade level serves the gifted and other advanced learners. At the middle school level, one school chooses to loosely group students and block classes, with a particular teacher serving the gifted and advance students in reading and in math at each grade level. The other middle school completely groups heterogeneously, and only groups gifted students together for algebra instruction in the eighth grade. The high school level remains student and parent choice of coursework, with recommendations made for students identified by high school officials for advanced coursework. Gifted students may or may not be included in those recommendations at this time. The AIG program would prefer a clearly defined and implemented scope and sequence of gifted curriculum and also consistent service delivery options across the

district.

Perceived weaknesses in the comprehensiveness of the AIG program are the need to have a formal "nurturing program" for grades K-3, and a greater awareness of the gifted program at the high school level. To assist in these programming goals, intensive and deliberate professional development is needed at both grade level spans. DEPs for high school level students will need to be developed to assist in articulating these goals.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Target professional development in for teachers in grades K-3 and at high school level; agendas, sign-in sheets, presentations.
- Revised DEP forms at the high school level.
- Establishment of a formal "nurturing" program for grades K-3.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has made improvements in providing specialized curricular resources for use in classrooms that serve advanced and gifted learners. We are going to try to expand the use of these resources consistently across the district and throughout as many grade levels as possible. We need to develop DEPs (Differentiated Education Plans) that reflect how we align the use of these resources with different areas of the curriculum to serve identified needs. The service delivery models chosen should be used consistently across the LEA.

Goals:

- Adopt research-based curriculum resources to assist teachers to meet the needs of specifically identified groups of gifted learners.
- Adopt a service delivery model that makes best use of available personnel and resources.
- Develop DEPs that better indicate program alignment with identified academic areas of service, as well as other subject areas such as science, social studies, etc., to provide a continuum of services.
- Ensure all schools have access to all programs, services, and resources available.

Description:

Learning opportunities for gifted learners should consist of a continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches, and resources. Along with service delivery models, these should be

aligned so that identified student needs are met as well as possible with program services and resources. These should be documented on the student DEPs, which also should be consistent across the district. Service delivery models that require fewer personnel resources, such as Schoolwide Cluster Grouping, need to be explored in our district.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Student DEPs/IDEPs.
- Budgetary resources set aside for purchase and maintenance of specialized/supplemental curriculum.
- Consistent use of service delivery models across the LEA.

Other Comments:

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Coordinator is currently included on a periodic basis on some leadership teams within the district. This occurs only when pertinent information needs to be communicated. The current structure of the AIG Coordinator's position makes it difficult for consistent involvement in leadership team meetings and decisions. In order for the coordinator to purposely monitor AIG program involvement, inclusion of the AIG Program and the coordinator as an established part of such meetings and teams is essential.

Goals:

- Include AIG Coordinator on district leadership teams.
- Make AIG a standing part of district-wide meeting agendas.

Description:

The AIG program should be an integral part of all LEA initiatives and divisions, which includes areas such as professional development and course development. The coordinator should be a part of the LEA decision-making teams, and consideration given to the program as decisions are being made that may affect the implementation of the local AIG plan. Communication should also occur between the program and the curriculum and instruction department of the LEA to ensure that gifted services are integrated within the total instructional program.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- District-wide meeting agendas, sign-in sheets, and minutes.

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 Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program shares information about all aspects of the local plan and its program policies and services, as well as the state regulations related to gifted education, with all personnel annually.

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

Description:

Communication with all LEA personnel is accomplished through many different means. The AIG Coordinator shares plan updates and program goals at the district-wide meeting at the beginning of the school year. Professional development in gifted education topics is available to most of the LEA's personnel each year either locally or regionally. Other means of distributing information among personnel involve time on the agenda at principal's meetings, scheduled AIG Advisory Council meetings, emails, phone calls, and the district and AIG website.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Agenda, presentations at district-wide meetings.
- Agenda, sign-in sheets, minutes from AIG Advisory Council meetings.
- Agenda, presentations, sign-in sheets from professional development.
- Emails and website communications.

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:

All teachers in the Mitchell County Schools LEA are made aware of gifted student identification and service needs. The AIG Coordinator presents an AIG update at the district-wide meeting at the beginning of the school year. We understand there is a need for special meetings at grades where school transitions are made, typically grades 4-5 and grade 8. We also would like to explore

beginning an AP (Advanced Placement) preparation program that occurs in the summer to encourage participation and better prepare our students for success in these courses.

Goals:

- Establish meetings involving teachers/parents/students at the key school transition points: elementary to middle school, and middle school to high school.
- Investigate establishing an AP preparation summer seminar for high-school students.

Description:

All teachers and schools should be reminded annually of local AIG identification and service policies and procedures at every grade level, but especially between the elementary, middle, and high school transitions. Changes in services between these grade level spans should be addressed. Transition meetings will ensure an effective continuation of services. The AIG program is also interested in starting an AP preparation program, held during the summer, to introduce high-school age students to the Advanced Placement program in our and its student expectations. Funding sources would need to be explored for this endeavor.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- AIG Coordinator participation in the beginning of the year district-wide meeting.
- Evidence of transition meetings held: agendas, presentations, sign-in sheets.
- Preparations made to begin an AP preparation summer seminar for high-school students.

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 Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

All personnel who are involved with gifted programming and services in the Mitchell County Schools LEA are invited by the AIG program to assist in the DEP (Differentiated Education Plan) development process for each student, and to attend the DEP parent meetings at each school. If a parent requests an individual meeting, the AIG Coordinator will arrange the meeting, which all school level team members will attend.

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

Description:

All personnel within a school site, collaborating under administrative support and guidance, should be

involved in meeting and planning with other educators and specialists on a consistent basis. They can share strategies, observe one another's classrooms, and look for points of curriculum intersection. The goal should be to develop learning experiences that will address the unique needs of all students, and provide increasing challenge for a range of learners. The gifted coordinator or specialists can act as a resource and support system for general educators and other specialists as they implement these strategies in their classrooms. This includes researching best practices and providing professional development and training. This collaboration can and should extend to the parents/families of gifted students and others. Parents are invited to be a part of the process at all levels.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- DEP meetings that include collaboration of all key personnel who are involved in the development of gifted student DEPs.
- Individual DEP student files.

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:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has provided professional development in the past that has included material addressing the characteristics of gifted learners and their unique affective needs. However, it is perceived that a systemic and sustained written plan should be developed to address these needs. This is sustained by on-going professional development and information for parents/families. The RTI (Responsiveness to Instruction) school-based teams will also be included as a part of the process, helping to develop intervention plans for students who may have social/emotional needs.

Goals:

- Develop a plan to address the affective characteristics of AIG students district-wide, which includes RTI teams.
- Provide on-going professional development that encourages collaboration between all faculty, school guidance counselors, and area professionals concerning the social/emotional needs of gifted students.
- Provided parents/families with information and resources to address the social/emotional needs of their gifted children.

Description:

The asynchronous development of gifted students can cause varied difficulties for those students. In educating parents about the social/emotional needs of their children, they become enabled to be better advocates. Differentiated guidance and counseling should be a part of school-wide services for gifted students, as well as grouping practices that allow access to other gifted peers at least part of

the day. Levels of challenge and rigor and curriculum pacing also pay a part in meeting the students' needs. Referral information needs to be readily available for families regarding local agencies, specialists, and dependable websites where they can find information and support.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- A written action plan that includes a list of documented supports, interventions, and policies that support the affective needs of gifted students in the district, which includes RTI.
- Workshops for parents; agendas and sign-in sheets; budgetary resources.
- Brochures, flyers, list of parent resources available on AIG web site.

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:

While our district has had students who have accelerated at least one grade level, started kindergarten early, or subject accelerated at least once, to date we have not had a consistent district-wide policy to govern such decisions. The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program focus will be to assist the district in developing a policy to guide administrators and parents in making these decisions. Also related to accelerative options for students is offering distance-learning courses and Credit by Demonstrated Mastery. Our program will be active in helping the district to develop the full use and potential of these options for our students.

Goals:

- Establish district-wide policy and procedures on acceleration at all grade levels (whole grade, subject, and within class).
- Integrate the State Board of Education's "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy into existing policies and procedures.
- Encourage opportunities for distance learning for highly gifted students or students who need additional service options not available at the local level.

Description:

Our program's goal is to assist administrators and parents in making wise accelerative and placement decisions for gifted students. We have purchased the IOWA Acceleration Scale, which is a tool to help schools and district teams make informed decisions concerning grade skips. The strategy is to develop a child study team to analyze several factors and make objective decisions. Principals and other administrators have been informed of the tool, but this tool has yet to be utilized. The AIG program, in assisting to develop district policy, will offer professional development to administrators to

familiarize them with its use. A district-wide policy on acceleration is needed to ensure that all parties in the LEA provide options in a similar manner and that obstacles are removed that prevent students from the research-based benefits that acceleration provides. In the development of district policies, we intend to integrate the SBE's "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy into existing policies and procedures. Additionally, we will promote the opportunities accessible through distance on-line learning and course for our students, which is especially helpful to us as a rural district with limited financial resources and personnel.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Professional development offered to administrators; agendas and sign-in sheets.
- Examples of "Credit by Demonstrated Mastery" policy used for students' benefit.
- Development of a written LEA policy for accelerative instructional and placement options.
- Enrollment records of gifted students who have enrolled in distance learning courses.

Other Comments:

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 Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools LEA demographics are unique in that it is a small, rural district with limited cultural diversity. Local demographics play a role in how our gifted services are structured in that there are a limited amount of identified gifted learners who are cultural or ethnically diverse or Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. LEP students include only approximately 5% of the student population. 16% of our student population is identified as exceptional (EC) students. The largest single demographic in our LEA is that of economically disadvantaged students, which comprised 59% of our average daily membership in 2011- 2012. We provide student identification to personnel who have a specialized focus such as ELL and EC teachers that may also provide services to our gifted students. We also maintain a deliberate focus on our economically disadvantaged students. On the occasion we have a highly gifted student, an IDEP (Individualized Differentiated Education Plan) is developed for that student. Our early college, Mayland Early College High School, addresses the needs of these populations of students as part of its stated mission.

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

Description:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program attempts to ensure that traditionally under-represented populations receive the same opportunities and services across the district. All personnel have been offered professional development concerning the characteristics of gifted students and the special needs of these special groups of gifted students. Students who show exceptional potential but may be lacking in language skills are nurtured in advanced classes with support from the ELL teachers.

Likewise, students who may be identified as twice-exceptional are monitored in advanced classes for any difficulties that may be addressed through assistance from the EC teacher. When necessary, a student who has extraordinary circumstances that need intensive interventions will have an IDEP developed to specify what special services that student will receive. Budget resources are allotted for students who may face difficulties participating in curricular or enrichment opportunities because of financial constraints, such as subsidies for fees charge for AP exams or registration fees and travel.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Analyses of all student and gifted student demographic data.
- Evidence of budget funds used to assist economically disadvantaged students.
- Professional development: sign-in sheets, agendas.
- Student DEPs/IDEPS.
- Enrolled students in Mayland Early College High School

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program currently encourages participation in individual choice experiences targeted to gifted learners, such as Duke TIP (Talent Identification Program), UNC-Asheville's Super Saturdays, or Governor's School. We also have limited participation in service clubs and competitions (such as BETA Club, LEGO Robotics, WCU Math Competition, and Battle of the Books. According to the results of our 2012 – 2013 survey of parents, students, and faculty, we received an overwhelming appeal from all stakeholders to help make more enrichment opportunities available for our students.

Goals:

- Communicate in a timely manner to parents, families, and students about appropriate extra-curricular programs and events.
- Sponsor academic and intellectual activities, both during and after school hours, that are of interest to AIG students and/or meet their needs.
- Ensure all students have access to enrichment activities.

Description:

Parents in our district indicated in survey data that they would like to see our district and AIG program offer more enrichment opportunities. This desire was echoed by the student survey data as well. There are numerous different enrichment options that could be added to the offerings currently available to students in our school district, with little perceived impact on our limited funding. Some

examples include those supported by outside entities, such as regional math and science fairs and competitions, problem-solving competitions, and area summer camps and other activities offered through local colleges and universities. Other options that could be carried out locally, with school staff and volunteer support, could be group programs such as gifted showcases of work, local Saturday programs, technology seminars, or other activities designed to meet areas of perceived student interest. Additionally, individual options could include service learning and mentorship programs.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Communications to parents, families, and students about appropriate extra-curricular programs and events, such as through the AIG and district website, e-mails, flyers, pamphlets and brochures, automated calls, newsletters, and mailings.
- Evidence of AIG or non-AIG student and/or personnel involvement in activities held at various sites: pictures, media coverage, sign-in sheets, etc.
- Budget resources allocated for assistance of sponsored activities (materials, etc.) and financial assistance for low-income students with demonstrated need.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Our program has a demonstrated need, indicated by responses on our 2012 – 2013 AIG Parent Survey, to increase the quality and quantity of communications with parents and families. While we do offer basic information on our website, there needs to be more information and suggested resources available for parents, to promote understanding in the exceptional needs of their gifted student. Two-way communication methods currently include e-mail, phone, and regular mail, but technology constantly provides more options and these should be explored. Also, news about the AIG program and its students should be shared frequently to improve public perception and community relations.

Goals:

- Provide parents/families information on current issues in gifted education, especially academic, intellectual, and social/emotional needs of gifted students, in a variety of ways.
- Suggest resources for parents on the unique needs of their gifted children and make those resources readily available.
- Concentrate on providing more two-way communication methods for parents/families and encourage their use.
- Share news and achievements of the AIG program and its students through local media and community resources with the assistance of the LEA's public relations officer.

Description:

Frequent and meaningful communication with parents/families, and the community at large, promotes the AIG program in a positive manner. Parents of gifted students often both request and need additional information on the needs of their children, and the AIG program can assist in referring and acquiring appropriate resources and making them accessible. When paired with two-way communication with specialists in gifted education, this empowers parents to become better advocates for their student. The image of the overall success of the AIG program is aided by sharing good news and accomplishments of the program and its students throughout the community.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Agendas, minutes, sign-in sheets from parent and community meetings.
- Parent/family and community surveys.

- Evidence of news and achievements shared through local media outlets.
- Communications with the LEA's public relations officer.
- Information shared through website, flyers, pamphlets, and brochures.

Other Comments:

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 Maintained Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program uses a variety of methods to communicate with all stakeholders concerning the goals and policies of the local AIG program and its relation to the NC AIG program standards. Even though we consider this a maintained practice, efforts will be made to update the information and the methods used to disseminate the information on a consistent basis, as well as make information available in relevant native languages when possible.

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

Description:

The Mitchell County Schools local AIG Plan is available for viewing through the district website. Contact information for the AIG Coordinator is included for any interested individuals to ask questions or voice concerns. Families of AIG students are invited to annual meetings at each school to obtain current information about the program, ask questions, and sign DEP's (Differentiated Education Plans). Parents are asked to serve on the AIG Advisory Council, with efforts made to include parents of students from different grade levels (elementary, middle, high school, early college) and from different demographic and geographic regions in the district. The AIG Coordinator also provides informational presentations to various stakeholder groups on an as-needed basis.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Documentation of parent informational and placement/DEP meetings at all school sites annually.
- Current AIG plan available on district and school websites.
- Links to the NCDPI AIG Wiki on district website.
- Brochures, pamphlets, flyers, newsletters disseminating information about various aspects of the AIG program.
- Parents representing all school levels/schools serving on the AIG Advisory Council.
- Informational presentations at Board of Education/Principal/County-wide faculty meetings.

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:

A functioning AIG Advisory Council currently exists as part of the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program. Parent input and perspective is intentionally sought, as well as other stakeholder groups such as civic and community groups, and businesses. While this practice is mostly evident, we will focus on improving family and community outreach as much as possible.

Goals:

- Translation of AIG program documents into native languages as needed and appropriate.
- Annual stakeholder survey results/summaries disseminated to public.
- Encourage the formation of a NC PAGE (Partners for the Advancement of Gifted Education) chapter in the district.

Description:

Advisory Committees can have a positive impact on the overall development of a gifted program. The members support the quality and integrity of the services by offering their expertise and knowledge. The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program Advisory Council includes members from administration, teachers, counseling staff, and parents/community corresponding to the district's demographics. In addition to supporting a successful advisory council, we support the formation of a NC PAGE chapter in the district. This will be a primarily parent-led, non-profit organization whose purpose is to advocate for gifted education in the district as well as provide assistance to the program in various ways.

Other perceived supports to improving the involvement of all stakeholders in the program are the translation of AIG program documents into native languages as needed and appropriate, as well as the sharing of annual stakeholder results.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Parent representatives on AIG Advisory Council reflecting demographics of district.
- AIG Advisory Council Meeting agendas and minutes.
- Analysis and sharing of summaries of annual survey results of stakeholders, including faculty/staff, parents, and students.
- Documents that have been translated into native languages.
- Evidence of the initial efforts of the formation of a NC PAGE chapter.

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:

While the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program presently uses several methods of communication with its stakeholders, it was discovered in the 2012 - 2013 program parent survey that some parents desired more frequent and meaningful communications from the AIG Program. We have a website in place, and plans to update it in the coming year will coincide with updates of the district website. There is also a need to update flyers used in the program as well. Whenever possible, we intend to translate both written and spoken communications into needed languages (primarily Spanish).

Goals:

- Increased and updated communications with parent/families and the general community about AIG opportunities on an on-going basis.
- Translation of AIG materials shared with parents/families/communities in appropriately needed native languages.

Description:

Technology is an important tool for communication, especially for the enhancement of an initiative that is handled by a single practitioner. A well managed website can offer instant access to essential information for any stakeholder. Special effort will be made to recreate and update an effective and attractive website for the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program. E-mail distribution lists of teachers, parents, and students are currently being compiled to facilitate the timely sharing of information. Translators will be available at meetings when necessary. Our program will continue to look at all communication methods that we utilize to update and maximize their effectiveness with our program stakeholders.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Communication through AIG websites, e-mails, flyers, mailings, newsletters, and automated phone calls.
- Materials translated into native languages when possible.
- Presence of interpreters/translators at AIG meetings and functions, as needed.

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:

Partnerships with stakeholders are essential to the wellbeing of the local AIG program and the students that it serves. Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has established partnerships, such as parent/community representatives that serve on the AIG Advisory Council, encouraging participation at UNC-Asheville's "Super Saturday" activities, and supporting students at the Mayland Early College High School. We still need to explore other avenues of support and services that may be available to us in the region.

Goals:

- Form meaningful partnerships with AIG parents/families to advocate for the AIG program.
- Strengthen and expand partnerships with regional institutions of higher education to enhance AIG programs and services.
- Establish meaningful relationships with local businesses and industry and other stakeholders within the community to enhance AIG programs and services.

Description:

A partnership with parent/families needs to extend beyond representatives our AIG Advisory Council to foster involvement in the planning and implementation of the local AIG program. We will support and encourage the formation of a NC PAGE (Partners for the Advancement of Gifted Education) chapter in our district, to provide a practical means of advocacy for the program.

Mayland Community College, in partnership with the Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey County school systems and the NC New Schools Initiative (<http://ncnewschools.org/>), support the Mayland Early College High School. The freshman enrollment continues to increase each year, and the current total of 76 students includes 12 AIG students. These students are typically from underserved populations and come from all three surrounding counties. Since the 2009 opening of the school, records were kept on AIG students at the school and those students included in the AIG program headcount. AIG budget funds have contributed, but not fully met, requests for assistance on textbook costs for these students. We would like to expand our partnership with the school and our AIG students in attendance there to include them in extracurricular and enrichment opportunities offered to our other high school students. We also need to hold AIG parent meetings on the campus for informational and Differentiated Education Plan purposes. An effort needs to be made to remember these teachers in our professional development offerings as well.

Existing partnerships with businesses and industry include support from the Unimin Corporation, a local nationally known mining company, for our science programs at the middle and high school level. These partnerships have supplemented the purchase of lab equipment and consumable supplies, which aids our district in offering quality higher-level classes, such as Advanced Placement in science. In the past, they helped to support enrichment and extra-curricular activities in our schools such as science fairs and Olympiads. Our AIG program would like to see a reappearance in these types of activities in our district, and a renewed involvement with not only Unimin, but also other potential supporters of STEM activities in our region.

We would also like to increase our involvement with other institutes of higher education, other than Mayland Community College and UNCA, to expand enrichment opportunities for our students, as well

as professional development for teachers. Other nearby colleges and universities include:

- Appalachian State University
- Lees-McCrae College
- Mars Hill College
- Western Carolina University

Additionally, with the aid of technological resources, potentially any institute of higher learning could become a resource for our program.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- DEP/Informational meeting agendas and sign-in sheets for MECHS.
- Professional development agendas and sign-in sheets.
- Budget resources allocated for MECHS.
- Evidence of financial and like-kind support from business and community partners.
- Evidence of outreach to institutes of higher education for assistance with program initiatives.

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:

Every three years, the Mitchell County Schools AIG Program completes the development of a local AIG plan, with the assistance of the AIG Advisory Council, the Regional AIG Coordinator's Roundtable, and has it approved by the local Board of Education.

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

Description:

The AIG Coordinator writes the local AIG plan, in cooperation with and with assistance from, the AIG Advisory Council. The plan is based on guidelines approved under State Board of Education Policy, GCS-U-000, which are the approved NC AIG Program Standards, and also mandated by legislation under Article 9B, Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students (N.C.G.S. § 115C-150.05-.08). Feedback is gathered from stakeholders to guide the process and assist program self-assessment. When writing the plan, each practice is addressed with a rationale, based on data and local context, that states why the local program chooses to declare that practice focused or maintained for the next cycle. The plan is submitted to the local Board of Education for approval, and then to NCDPI for review and comments. The final plan is available for review on the LEA's website and in written form upon request. The plan may be revised before the end of the next plan cycle; major revisions that reflect a change in policy or practice will need to be resubmitted for local Board of Education approval.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Local AIG Plan written self-assessment completed on file.
- Local AIG Plan BOE approval document with signatures.
- Submittal of local Board of Education approved plan to NC Department of Public Instruction.
- Availability of local AIG Plan on district and AIG website.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Coordinator currently oversees the implementation of the local plan and program on a on-going basis, though fidelity checks are difficult due to the lack of release time as the Coordinator's position is currently structured. Also, the AIG plan needs to be integrated with all school improvement plans and the district strategic and improvement plans when they are developed.

Goals:

- Inclusion of the local AIG plan in all other strategic plans at the school and district level.
- Development of a procedure for annual program evaluation, that includes multiple measures, and is paralleled to the NC AIG Program Standards and Practices.
- Publicize and share evaluation data with stakeholders on an annual basis.
- Collect data regularly, both informally and formally, from a variety of sources, especially student growth data.
- Ensure the AIG Coordinator's position is structured in such a way to allow time for effective evaluation.

Description:

The AIG Coordinator, along with the AIG Advisory Council and applicable Central Office staff, is primarily responsible for successful local AIG plan implementation and the continual monitoring of the plan on a consistent basis. The aim is to ensure what is documented as policy in the plan is what is being carried out in practice. Interim reports are made during each three-year plan cycle to the state director of gifted services at the NC Department of Public Instruction.

A written procedure needs to be developed for annual program evaluation. The collection of multiple types of data should be included which address the NC AIG Program Standards and Practices. Summaries of the evaluations should be shared with all relevant stakeholders. In order for the program evaluation process to be effective, the coordinator's position should be structured in such a way to allow ample time to direct such a task.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Development of a written plan for program evaluation.
- Longitudinal data and evaluation evidence kept on file.
- Summaries of evaluation data publicized on an annual basis.
- School-level and district-level strategic plans that include goals of the local AIG plan.

Other Comments:

Practice C

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has a yearly budget in place to categorize expenditures and facilitate and implement the local AIG plan. However, all state funds received for the gifted program must be available for that purpose. Any personnel paid from state AIG funding are required to have AIG licensure. Also, due to the low level of state funding for our district, the AIG Advisory Council will be advocating for and seeking out other funding sources as well, including local monies, grant funds, and business partnerships to help meet the needs of our gifted learners and the program.

Goals:

- Develop a defensible budget that allocates 100% of state funding received (034) to facilitate and implement the local AIG plan.
- Advocate and seek out other funding sources, such as local monies, grant funding, and business partnerships.

Description:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program's budget prioritizes costs and program needs to provide the best alignment possible with the local AIG plan. The AIG Coordinator is primarily responsible for the development and maintenance of the budget, with the assistance of the AIG Advisory Council. During regular AIG Advisory Council meetings, alignment of the budget and the local AIG plan are discussed. The coordinator requests and receives regular updates from the district Finance Officer about expenditures and balances in each budget category. Each category of the budget is tied to a standard and practice of the local AIG plan. All state funding is necessary to carry out this plan effectively.

During the 2013 - 2016 plan cycle, the AIG Advisory Council will be assisting the AIG Coordinator in pursuing other sources of funding to supplement the state funding in some budget areas. This may include local monies, grant funding, and/or business partnerships. Grant funding looks to be the most promising avenue, and this will be looked into extensively.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- A budget that allocates 100% of state funding (034) to facilitate and implement the local AIG plan.
- Other sources of funding received.

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:

To date, no formal tracking of AIG student data by our local LEA or AIG program has ever been undertaken. The AIG Coordinator needs to be included in the data analysis at the LEA level, and also the school level.

Goals:

- Create a systematic procedure for the collection and analyzing of data.
- Gather, analyze, and share AIG student growth and achievement data for the LEA, including EOG, EOC, PSAT and SAT, AP, ACT, PLAN, EXPLORE, and other qualitative data.
- Use disaggregated data to determine individual and group AIG student trends and to inform program instruction and services.
- Track and address LEA dropout data and potential AIG student failures.
- Include the AIG Coordinator to serve on the LEA's data team.

Description:

The tracking of student data is an important tool in continuing AIG program evaluation. The AIG Coordinator is primarily responsible for compiling and analyzing the data at the LEA level and distributing the data to all relevant stakeholders, and therefore should be an active part of the LEA's data team. Such data supports program fidelity and accountability, and serves to guide the program's services. Often data that includes potential failures, especially at the high school level, can serve to indicate students who would benefit from individual counseling, mentoring, or an academic intervention plan or IDEP. Analyzing overall performance and growth data of AIG students helps the coordinator and administrators evaluate program effectiveness on a continual basis.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- NC testing results, EVVAS growth predictors, and other performance indicators.
- Local high school dropout rate reports and potential failure reports.
- Evidence of IDEPs, intervention plans, or mentoring.

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:

To date, no formal tracking of AIG student data by our local LEA or AIG program has ever been

undertaken. The AIG Coordinator needs to be included in the data analysis at the LEA and also the school level. This includes the tracking the data of students from traditionally underserved populations.

Goals:

- Create a systematic procedure for the collection and analyzing of data.
- Include the AIG Coordinator to serve on the LEA's data team.
- Collaborate with other specialists in the LEA to help cultivate student potential and recognize giftedness.
- Implement a formal K-3 program to cultivate and develop the potential of young students.

Description:

In order to be sure that students from underrepresented populations are being served, it is essential for the AIG Program to not only look at the growth and achievement data of each subgroup of the gifted population, but also how these groups are being referred, identified, and served. Often, other specialists that work with these students can recognize gifted characteristics in these students more readily than other educators, and should be encouraged to cultivate potential and recognize giftedness. A formal program in grades K-3 would assist teachers in recognizing students of any subgroup at a young age, and seek to cultivate those talents so that these students might not be underrepresented in future screening pools.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Evidence of the implementation of a formal K-3 program to develop potential of young students.
- AIG LEA identification and headcount data, analyzed for trends in demographics and subgroups.
- Enrollment data for upper level courses that analyzes demographic data.

Other Comments:

Practice F

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

This practice is a Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

Professional development records for all employees of the LEA are officially kept in personnel files at the Central Office. These files contain teacher certification and licensure records and include Continuing Education Credits an employee has earned. As of the 2012 - 2013 school year, only one employee has gifted licensure through the university pathway, while one teacher is working on completing this licensure. The program will focus on keeping a separate set of files for this purpose, maintained by the AIG Coordinator, that includes all coursework and professional development in gifted education completed by district employees, as they seek to meet local professional

development requirements.

Goals:

- Maintain an AIG personnel qualifications file, indicating the credentials of personnel serving AIG students.
- Cooperate with the personnel director to maintain accurate records.

Description:

Mitchell County Schools and its AIG Program currently do not have enough funding to facilitate the hiring of any AIG teaching specialists. Therefore, we must rely on regular education teachers to deliver instructional services to our gifted students. We would prefer our teachers obtain gifted licensure through the university pathway; however, this is up to the individual teacher to pursue. We are in the process, during the 2013 - 2016 plan cycle, of establishing local professional development requirements for teachers who work with gifted students. This would include almost all teachers in our district within our current structure. Accurate records will need to be kept by the AIG Coordinator and cooperation with the Personnel Director at our Central Office will be essential in this process.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- AIG personnel qualification files, maintained by AIG Coordinator.
- Personnel records on file at the LEA's Central Office.

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:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has an active Advisory Council, which meets regularly (at least quarterly) during the school year. Its members represent the demographics of the district and include Central Office and school administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and community partners. Members perform an important and necessary role as a group of stakeholders that offer their perspective, expertise, time, and commitment to the implementation of the local AIG program.

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

Description:

Functions of the council include:

- Meeting regularly and working together to offer advice about the development or improvement of

gifted student services; helping to establish program priorities.

- Becoming knowledgeable about current programs, research, and best practices in gifted education and its relationship with general education.
- Providing feedback about the effectiveness of the gifted education plan and reviewing it annually.
- Fostering a collaborative relationship between the school personnel and the council.
- Making suggestions to promote community awareness of gifted education.
- Supporting professional development training for staff.
- Advocating for gifted education initiatives in the district and providing input and support for funding at all levels.
- Encouraging communication and a better understanding of gifted education issues among teachers, parents, and the general public.
- Serving as a liaison to help the community understand and support gifted education services.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Advisory Council member list.
- E-mail communication with members.
- Advisory Council meeting agendas, sign-in sheets, minutes.
- Documents that reveal work accomplished by the Advisory Council, such as program evaluations and program self-assessments.
- Notebooks kept by Advisory Council members.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

During the 2012 – 2013 school year, electronic surveys of LEA faculty/staff, parents, and students were conducted. Employees and high school students were contacted through their district e-mail accounts. Parents were sent home a flyer with a website link to their survey. Elementary and middle grade students were allowed to complete the surveys at school in the computer lab or on other electronic devices. Although the surveys yielded valuable feedback, the program needs to develop additional ways of gathering input from stakeholders.

Goals:

- Use multiple ways of gathering input from stakeholders throughout the year.
- Model feedback to parallel the self-assessment.

Description:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program will be continuing to conduct stakeholder surveys

annually. Efforts will be made to improve upon these surveys, such as providing parents an alternative paper-based form of the survey to avoid technological barriers. Ways to reach general community input will also be explored, such as using the local media outlets. Interviews and question sessions could be a possibility for such contact. Evaluations will be solicited during professional development from teachers, and a method of input for parent during meetings will be provided. Our website also offers an e-mail contact component as well as other contact information.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Survey forms, survey results and analyses of results.
- Records of interviews and question sessions of stakeholders.
- Professional development evaluations.
- Feedback component (written or oral) during parent meetings.
- Website contact component.

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 Focused Practice for 2013-2016.

Rationale:

The Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has complied with the submission of required state reports and plans, including revisions that were suggested to the 2010 – 2013 plan. However, it is realized by the Advisory Council that program evaluation should occur on an annual basis, using multiple sources of data, and any major changes in the program should be reflected in a revision to the local LEA plan, and subsequent Board of Education approval.

Goals:

- Gather multiple sources of data for continuous program improvement.
- Yearly annual review of plan/program evaluation, facilitated by the AIG Coordinator and the AIG Advisory Council.

Description:

In North Carolina, gifted education programs are accountable for documenting that state resources dedicated to the program are being used both effectively and economically. Stakeholders have a right to be involved in the program evaluations and the process needs to include both formative and summative data. Care will be taken to include all relevant stakeholder groups during future evaluations, including more community member input and feedback from parents of students who are not identified gifted. We will also be working on a specific plan for annual program evaluation. This will include the surveys we are already conducting, as well as other data collection methods and sources, both qualitative and quantitative. An important piece of information that we will definitely be tracking is AIG student standardized testing using growth data, not merely scores.

Findings will be presented yearly at open public meetings, such as the local LEA Board of Education Meetings and in written forms that are published on the AIG website as well.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Copies of various data analyses on file.
- AIG Advisory Council agendas, sign-in sheets, minutes.
- Program self-assessments.
- Plan revision draft copies and copies of revised plans.
- Evaluation results shared at meetings.
- Evaluation results posted on website.

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:

The only formal evaluations conducted in recent years have been the self-assessments completed by the AIG Advisory Council in preparation for revising the local AIG plan as required by the state. In the 2010 - 2013 plan it was stated that evaluation data would be broken down by building and results listed on the AIG website; however, this has not occurred. It is the intention of our program to be transparent, and to focus on sharing and publishing summaries of data from our program evaluations in various formats based on the audience.

Goals:

- Disseminate all data from evaluations of the local AIG program by the sharing and publishing of data from our program evaluations in various formats, based on the audience.

Description:

Evaluation data should be summarized and communicated to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner that is clear, reflects local perspectives, and is considerate of the context and situational factors affecting the schools and personnel involved. In the collection and distribution of this information, there should be both qualitative and quantitative information shared.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Written reports of AIG program evaluations shared on website, etc., with public.
- Presentations (oral and/or written) of AIG program evaluations at AIG Advisory Council, principal/Central Office, and parent/family meetings.

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 Mitchell County Schools AIG Program has a Due Process Rights policy in place as set forth by North Carolina General Statute § 115C-150.05-.08 (known as Article 9B) in Section 8 (see the Description section below). The rights are posted on the AIG Website, as well as included on parent brochures and orally read and discussed at most parent meetings. We will be maintaining this practice as well as translating the policy into needed languages.

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

Description:

§ 115C-150.8. Review of Disagreements.

In the event that the procedure developed under G.S. 115C-150.7(b)(7) fails to resolve a disagreement, the parent or guardian may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. The scope of review shall be limited to (i) whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an academically or intellectually gifted student, or (ii) whether the local plan developed under G.S. 115C-150.7 has been implemented appropriately with regard to the child. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusions of law. Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decision of the administrative law judge becomes final, is binding on the parties, and is not subject to further review under Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. (1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 18.24(f).)

Mitchell County Schools AIG Program Due Process Policy

Mitchell County Schools AIG Program follows due process procedures for parental grievances or disagreements concerning student placement or services. Details about this process are available on the district AIG website, as well as disseminated with parent placement communications. A parent may request a copy of the DUE Process Procedures at any time from the AIG Coordinator. The Due Process Procedures are also described below:

1. The parent/guardian requests a conference with the school-based review team.
 - a. Parent/guardian may make a request for a conference with the team to discuss the concerns about the recommendation.
 - b. The team reviews student's records and their previous nomination, identification, and service option decision. The team may gather additional information about the student from teachers and or parent as needed.

- c. The team grants the conference within 5 school days of the request and responds to the parent in writing within 5 school days of the conference.
2. The parent/guardian appeals the team's decision to the AIG Coordinator.
 - a. Parent/guardian may appeal the team's decision in writing to the AIG Coordinator within five days of receiving the written response from the team.
 - b. The AIG Coordinator reviews the grievance within 5 school days of the receipt of the appeal.
 - c. The AIG Coordinator responds in writing to the outcome of the review within 10 school days.
3. The parent/guardian appeals to the Superintendent of MCS
 - a. The parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the AIG Coordinator to the superintendent within 5 school days of receiving the response.
 - b. The superintendent reviews the grievance within 5 school days from the receipt of the appeal.
 - c. The superintendent responds in writing concerning the outcome within 10 school days to the parent/guardian, AIG Coordinator, and principal of the given school.
4. The parent/guardian appeals to the MCS Board of Education.
 - a. A parent may appeal to the MCS Board of Education in writing within 10 school days following the written response from the superintendent.
 - b. The Board may offer a final decision within 30 days of written receipt.
5. The parent/guardian petitions the administrative law judge for a contested case hearing.
 - a. Parent/guardian may file a petition for a contested case hearing under ~Article3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.
 - b. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusions of law. Notwithstanding the provisions of ~Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decision of the judge becomes final, is binding on all involved parties, and is not subject to further review under ~Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes.

Planned Sources of Evidence:

- Due Process Rights included and detailed in local AIG plan (see Standard 1, Practice B).
- Due Process Rights shared in multiple ways with families (website, pamphlets and brochures, shared orally at parent meetings).
- Due Process Rights translated into needed languages.

Other Comments:

Glossary (optional):

Appendix (optional):

Prior Notice:Consent MCS_AIG Form 1.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Mitchell County AIG Process Chart Placement Timeline.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Non-placement letter.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Parent Referral Information Letter 2nd Notice.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Parent Referral Information Letter.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Parent Signatures Initial Placement Form 4.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Placement Rubric MCS_AIG Form 3.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
Teacher Referral MCS_AIG Form 2.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1*)
DUE PROCESS PROCEDURES.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 1:6*)
2013 DEP Update.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 2*)
Purchase Form.pdf (*Appendix - Standard 2:6*)
BoardApprovalDocument2013.PDF (*Local Board Approval Document*)