

Essex County Public Schools

Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted

2020-2025

LEA#	028 Essex County Public Schools		
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Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted

Each school board must review and approve a comprehensive plan for the education of the gifted. That plan must provide specific explanations of the school division's implementation of the *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students*. School divisions, working in conjunction with their school boards, should determine the appropriate timeframe of applicability for their division's gifted plan. Historically, division plans span five years. For the technical review, the DOE will request a division to send their most current, approved plan at the time of the review. The applicable timeframe for the division's plan does not need to correspond to the collection year of their technical review. Information on the DOE technical review schedule can be found at the gifted education homepage at the Virginia Department of Education's Web site http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/gifted_ed/index.shtml

Section 8VAC20-40-60A of the *Regulations* states that, "Each school board shall submit a comprehensive plan for the education of gifted students to the Department of Education (DOE) for technical review on a schedule determined by the Department. Each school board shall approve a comprehensive plan for the education of gifted students that includes the components identified in these regulations." To assist school divisions and school boards in complying with section 8VAC20-40-60A, the Virginia Department of Education has created this template for developing Local Plans for the Education of the Gifted (revised January 2011). This public document addresses all aspects of local services for gifted students, including, but not limited to, the area(s) of giftedness the school division will serve, an operational definition of giftedness in the division and its supporting identification procedures, program services, professional development, curriculum development, and parent and community involvement.

Each section of the plan should address specific procedures and information for each area of giftedness identified by the school division. If a school division identifies students in general intellectual aptitude (GIA) and specific academic aptitude-mathematics (SAA-M), then the section for referral procedures, for example, should reflect the specific referral procedures for GIA and SAA-M. Throughout the local plan template, school divisions may need to copy and paste the drop down boxes, the insert text form fields, and any pertinent information for each area of giftedness identified by the division. In order to be able to 'choose an item' from a drop down box, simply right click on the highlighted 'choose an item' wording and the drop down arrow should appear on the right. Right clicking on the arrow will then allow the drop down box choices to appear. If certain procedures or policies apply to more than one area of giftedness, simply copy and paste the drop down selection box to reflect all areas of giftedness that are applicable to the procedures or policy.

Once the completed comprehensive local plan for the education of gifted students has been approved by the local school board, the plan shall be accessible to the public through the division's Web site. The division shall ensure that printed copies of the plan are available to citizens who do not have online access.

For more information, contact the Virginia Department of Education specialist for Governor's Schools and Gifted Education at 804-225-2884.

General Information regarding the Gifted Program in Essex County Public Schools.

In section 8VAC20-40-40A of the *Regulations*, divisions are required to screen, refer, identify, and serve gifted students in at least general intellectual aptitude or specific academic aptitude. School divisions may identify and serve gifted students in career and technical aptitude or visual or performing arts aptitude, or both, at their discretion. On the chart below, please indicate all areas of giftedness that are identified and served within the division. Please copy and paste any additional rows as might be needed to address all areas in Specific Academic Aptitude and/or Visual and/or Performing Arts that are identified by the school division.

Area of Giftedness Identified by the Division	Grades Served
General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA)	K-12
Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) -Reading/Language Arts -Mathematics	K-12

Part I: Statement of Philosophy and Local Operational Definition of Giftedness for the School Division (8VAC20-40-60A.1)

A. Division Statement of Philosophy for the Education of Gifted and All Students

Vision:

In partnership with our students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community, Essex County Public Schools is committed to creating Pathways to Excellence by promoting a positive, student-focused culture striving for continuous improvement that meets the academic, athletic, artistic, and career-occupational needs of all our students by guiding, inspiring, celebrating, and teaching our students as we equip them to meet the challenges of a global society.

Mission Statement:

Essex County Public Schools exists to serve the individual educational needs of our students.

Theme:

Excellence through Service

Gifted Goals and Objectives:

As part of the vision and mission of Essex County Public Schools, the Gifted Education Program recognizes and identifies diverse gifted learners and provides a comprehensive program that:

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- Delivers an appropriately differentiated instructional program responsive to student ability and learning needs
- Assists students in achieving maximum use of potential to achieve personal success
- Provides a continuum of program service options
- Addresses the social and emotional needs of diverse gifted students
- Supports an educational environment that challenges gifted learners and enables students to perform at levels of excellence
- Facilitates the development of self-directed learners

In accordance with the guidelines established by the Virginia Department of Education, exemplary program standards for gifted learners will be achieved through the collaborative efforts of the school division, students, parents, and community.

B. Division Operational Definition of Giftedness

This section should include an operational definition for each area of giftedness (general intellectual aptitude, specific academic aptitude, visual and/or performing arts aptitude, or career and technical aptitude) identified and served by the division. An operational definition provides the concrete, observable, and/or measurable criteria for ‘giftedness’ used by the division in the identification process. Such a definition might include a listing of the evidence of student readiness for gifted educational services, e.g. evidence of gifted behaviors as determined by a valid and reliable teacher checklist or evidence of superior academic performance based on a norm-referenced assessment of aptitude.

“Gifted students means, those students . . . who demonstrate high levels of accomplishment or show the potential for higher levels of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. Their aptitudes and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special programs to meet their educational needs. These students are identified by professionally qualified persons through the use of multiple criteria as having potential or demonstrated aptitudes . . . in one or more of the following areas: General intellectual aptitude, specific intellectual aptitude, career and technical aptitude, and visual or performing arts aptitude” (Attachment A, *Regulation Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students, definitions* p. 2).

Essex County Public Schools defines giftedness as the manifestation of high levels of ability and achievement at the 85th percentile or higher relative to other high-functioning individuals of the same age, experience, and background. Gifted learners demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement, task persistence, and are able to work at increased levels of complexity when compared to other learners. Gifted learners demonstrate intellectual aptitude and performance potential such that enrichment and differentiated learning opportunities are needed to foster continued academic growth.

Students who are identified with General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) exhibit superior reasoning skills; demonstrate rapid understanding of many topics and rapid mastery of facts; offer original

responses; are inquisitive; ask relevant questions; seek out challenges; and are self-directed learners. These students score at or above the 85th percentile on nationally-normed ability and/or achievement tests, and receive above-average ratings on teacher and parent behavioral rating scales.

Students who are identified with Specific Academic Aptitude (SAA) demonstrate rapid understanding and mastery of facts within a specific discipline (English/Language Arts, Mathematics). Within the identified discipline, students exhibit superior reasoning skills; demonstrate rapid understanding of many topics and rapid mastery of facts; offer original responses; are inquisitive; ask relevant questions; seek out challenges; and are self-directed learners. These students score at or above the 85th percentile on discipline-specific portions of nationally-normed ability and/or achievement tests, and receive above-average ratings on teacher and parent behavioral rating scales.

The Essex County Public School division identifies and serves students in grades K-12 for gifted education. At any grade level, a teacher, parent, legal guardian, administrator, counselor, or the student himself/herself may make a referral. The initial referral form and parental consent form must be completed by October 15 for the fall testing window or February 15 for the spring testing window. All referrals that come in after these dates will be held until the following scheduled testing window. Referrals received after February 15 of each school year will be processed the following school year.

At the second grade level, a tiered identification process is used. All students are screened with a standardized instrument, such as the *Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test*. Standardized test data are also reviewed. Students who meet certain minimum scores are eligible for additional testing.

Part II: Program Goals and Objectives (8VAC20-40-60A.2)

This section should include goals and objectives for the school division's gifted education program. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.

A. Identification:

Goal: To identify gifted students in grades K-12 in areas including General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Intellectual Aptitude in both Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics

Objectives:

- To evaluate and revise procedures which increase referrals and eligibility of students from underrepresented populations for gifted education program services
- To enhance professional development opportunities and support for schools in the identification and placement of gifted students
- To review and revise the Student Identification Profile as needed
- To consider alternative assessments when results of standardized assessments are not well-aligned with other data as indicated on the Student Identification Profile

B. Delivery of Services:

Goal: To refine and implement best practices to support differentiated instruction for gifted students in grades K-12 in areas including General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Intellectual Aptitude in both Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics

Objectives:

- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers of the gifted
- Research and implement strategies which support success among students from underrepresented populations through a continuum of gifted education program services
- Provide cluster grouping arrangements at all levels which support differentiated instruction for all gifted learners
- Provide counseling services to encourage gifted learners to explore educational opportunities to facilitate learning and to understand the uniqueness of giftedness

C. Curriculum and Instruction:

Goal: Provide a continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches and resource materials which support the unique needs of gifted learners in grades K-12 in areas including General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Intellectual Aptitude in both Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics

Objectives:

- Provide gifted students opportunities that include higher-level thinking skills and creativity through differentiation of instruction
- Assist teachers with instructional planning practices that include higher-level thinking skills and creativity through differentiation

D. Professional Development:

Goal: Provide ongoing professional development opportunities which enhance existing knowledge and skills in the use of research-based practices in gifted education

Objectives:

- Provide professional development for schools on an as-needed basis
- Collaborate with teachers to share instructional strategies based on best practices in gifted education

- Communicate to parents and other stakeholders about best practices utilized in identifying and serving gifted students
- Provide appropriate professional development to support the identification of gifted students including underrepresented populations
- Provide professional development to school counselors regarding the nature and needs of gifted students

E. Equitable Representation of Students:

Goal: To identify all eligible students from underrepresented populations including, but not limited to, students from different cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds

Objectives:

- Use an assessment to screen all second grade students
- To increase teacher awareness of characteristics of gifted learners

F. Parent and Community Involvement:

Goal: To increase stakeholder awareness and participation in the gifted education program

Objectives:

- To facilitate parent involvement through outreach efforts
- To facilitate community support of the gifted education program through various outreach efforts

Part III: Screening, Referral, Identification, and Service Procedures

A. Screening Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

This section should provide screening procedures for each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. These procedures should include the annual review of student data used to create a pool of potential candidates for further assessment. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.

Screening Procedures for General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

Screening Assessment

Screening may be conducted at any time during the school year. At the second grade level, a tiered identification process is used. All students are screened with a standardized instrument, such as the *Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test*. Standardized test data are also reviewed. Students who meet certain minimum scores are eligible for additional testing.

The criteria for other gifted education programs may differ. Students who qualify for the ECPS gifted education program are not automatically qualified for other gifted education programs.

Students who exceed expected ranges on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening will also be monitored by classroom teachers for possible referral. Counselors will compile a list of students achieving advanced proficiency on Virginia's Standards of Learning Tests to use as a screening tool. Students may be referred for further evaluation using the referral process.

Special Populations: Students screened and/or evaluated for other programs that demonstrate achievement or aptitude scores may be referred by the school principal, teacher, parent, students, peers, or the student themselves for further screening and/or evaluation for the gifted education program. Data reviews may include:

- Review of Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) scores
- Review of Standards of Learning scores at the pass/advanced proficiency level
- Review of student performance annually in relevant academic areas addressed by gifted education program services
- Review of other standardized assessments that may be in student's records

B. Referral Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

This section provides referral procedures for each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. These procedures shall permit referrals from parents or legal guardians, teachers, professionals, students, peers, self, or others. These procedures should include to whom referrals are submitted and the timeline for the division to provide parents/guardians with the results of the eligibility process. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.

Referral procedures for all areas of giftedness.

Referrals may be made by teachers, parents, counselors, school administrators, students, peers, or the student themselves. Referrals should be submitted to the gifted coordinator. Information about referring a student for screening and/or evaluation can be obtained in the main office at each school.

Referrals are accepted and processed during both semesters. Referrals received prior to October 15 will be processed during the fall testing window of November and December. The initial referral form and parental consent form must be completed by October 15 for the fall testing window or February 15 for the spring testing window. All referrals that come in after these dates will be held until the following scheduled testing window.

Referrals received after February 15 of each school year will be processed the following school year.

- Referrals may be made by a teacher, parent, administrator, counselor, student, peer, or by the student themselves. Forms are available at each school and online.
- Each year, a flyer that describes the gifted education program and the referral process will be distributed to all families. Information will also be available on the ECPS website. General screening occurs in second grade. Students demonstrating advanced ability will be included in the screening pool.
- A review of student work may be used as a basis for inclusion in the screening pool.
- Transfer students who have been identified in another school system may be provisionally placed until evaluations and eligibility is determined according to ECPS criteria.
- There is a 90-day window from the date of the signed referral for completion of all assessments.

C. Identification Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

This section provides identification procedures for each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. Identification in GIA programs shall be K-12 and must include a nationally norm-referenced aptitude test. Identification in SAA programs shall be K-12 or as assessment instruments exist to support identification, and must include either a nationally norm-referenced aptitude or achievement test. Identification in CTA and VPA programs shall be at the discretion of the school division. Specific references pertaining to each area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.

1. Multiple Criteria Listing (8 VAC 20-40-40D.3)

This section includes the three or more categories that divisions shall include to develop a profile or composite for each student being considered. This listing of categories should be repeated for each area of giftedness identified by the division. Please copy and paste the section below to support all identified areas of giftedness. NOTE: Selection of either item 5a or 5b or both counts as a single category.

Click here to select area of giftedness.

1. Assessment of appropriate student products, performance, or portfolio
2. Record of observation of in-class behavior

Teacher Rating Scale (SIGS)

3. Appropriate rating scales, checklists, or questionnaires

Parent/Guardian Rating Scale (SIGS)

4. Individual interview

5a. Individual or group-administered, nationally norm-referenced aptitude test(s) (must be included for GIA)

Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test - GIA, SIA (Reading, Mathematics)

5b. Individual or group-administered, nationally norm-referenced achievement test(s)

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) - GIA, SIA (Reading, Mathematics)

6. Record of previous achievements (awards, honors, grades, etc.)

7. Additional valid and reliable measures or procedures

- Locally created fluency and creativity measure based on Bertie Kingore's work (Draw Start from Bertie Kingore)
- Locally created writing sample

Instruments used by ECPS are chosen to minimize testing bias associated with socioeconomic status, English proficiency, and/or disability.

No single instrument or criteria shall be used to deny or guarantee access to gifted education programs.

D. Placement Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

This section provides procedures for the placement of gifted students in each area of giftedness identified and served by the division. These procedures include information about the identification and placement committee.

1. Identification/Placement Committee (8VAC 20-40-40D)

- a. This section includes the number of persons comprising the Identification/Placement Committee by category.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

1 Classroom Teacher

1 School Counselor

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School Psychologist

Assessment Specialist

1 Principal or Designee

1 Gifted Education Coordinator

Other(s) Specify:

b. Type of Identification/Placement Committee

This section indicates the type of Identification/Placement Committee the division uses.

School-level

Division-level

2. Eligibility (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

This section includes a chart detailing all criteria that could be considered in the identification process for a specific area of giftedness identified by the division. A description of the eligibility process used by the committee to make decisions regarding eligibility for services shall follow the chart. It includes a timeline for making eligibility decisions within 90 instructional days of the school division's receipt of the parent's(s') or legal guardian's(s') consent for assessment.

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Measure	Administered/ Completed by	Scored by	Provided to the committee by
Teacher Rating Scale (SIGS)	Classroom teacher(s)	District Gifted Education Coordinator or designee	School gifted education coordinator
Parent/Guardian Rating Scale (SIGS)	Parent/Guardian	District Gifted Education Coordinator or designee	School gifted education coordinator
Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test / Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students	School Psychologist Classroom Teacher	School Psychologist or District Gifted Education Coordinator or designee	School Psychologist or School gifted education coordinator
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	Classroom teacher(s)	District Gifted Education Coordinator or Designee	School Psychologist or School gifted education coordinator
Creativity and fluency measures	School division gifted education coordinator or designee	District Gifted Education Coordinator or Designee	School gifted education coordinator
Writing Sample	School division gifted education coordinator or designee	District Gifted Education Coordinator or Designee	School gifted education coordinator

No single instrument or criteria shall be used to deny or guarantee access to gifted education programs. A profile-based method relying on committee consensus is employed. A score of 85% or higher must be attained on a standardized achievement and/or ability test. Parent/guardians are invited to meet with the gifted education coordinator to hear the results of the assessments and the committee’s recommendation following the Identification/Placement Committee meeting. The process may take up to 90 days from the date of receipt of parental consent for evaluation. If parents/guardians are unable to attend a meeting, a letter is sent to parents/guardians and the person making the referral indicating the committee’s decisions.

3. Determination of Services (8VAC20-40-60A.3)

This section describes the process of determining appropriate educational services for identified K-12 students.

Area of Giftedness: General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

The school's Identification and Placement Committee carefully examines the multiple criteria used during assessment and determines student eligibility as reported on the Student Profile. Areas of eligibility and specific criteria are used to match the student's needs with the appropriate level of program service. No single instrument, score, or criterion is used to exclude or include a child for eligibility.

The district-level Gifted Education Coordinator administers assessments and collects qualitative and quantitative data related to the multiple criteria used to determine eligibility for gifted services. This information is recorded on a matrix-style document called the Student Identification and Placement Profile. The data points are evaluated as *below average*, *average*, and *above average*.

When a majority of the data points are clustered in the above average range, eligibility for GIA (K-12) or SSA (K-12) is determined.

Placement options include:

- Class placements with cluster groups at all grade levels
- High school course selections
- Possible acceleration in appropriate courses (at the intermediate and high school levels)
- Small group instruction
- Other appropriate instruction: independent study, online classes, etc.

Support is provided by the Gifted Education Coordinator to classroom teachers in the form of collaboration, supplying materials and resources, offering professional development to teachers, and offering learning opportunities to students.

Part IV: Notification Procedures (8VAC20-40-60A.4)

This section includes the procedures used for (a) notifying parents/guardians when the individual identification process is initiated; (b) requesting permission for individual testing and/or collection of additional information; (c) requesting permission for provision of appropriate service options; and, (d) parents/guardians wishing to file an appeal of the identification outcome, change in placement, or exit decision. Any procedural differences pertaining to a specific area of giftedness identified by the division should be clearly indicated.

Area of Giftedness: General Intellectual Aptitude
 Specific Academic Aptitude

Parents/guardians receive written notification from Gifted Education Coordinator for the following:

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- Request for permission for student assessment, including individual and group testing, and collection of additional data within school ten days of receipt of referral;
 - Committee decision regarding student eligibility for program services within ten school days of the identification and placement committee meeting;
 - The school division's appeals process within ten school days of the identification and placement committee meeting;
 - Request for permission for placement of the student identified eligible for services within ten days of the identification and placement committee meeting;
 - Change of services within ten school days of request for change of services; and,
 - Re-evaluation if requested by the student, a teacher, a counselor, or an administrator within ten school days of request.
- A. When a student is either referred by a teacher, parent, or identified from annual screening for additional evaluation, a letter of consent is sent home by the Gifted Education Coordinator to obtain parent/guardian permission for an evaluation for the gifted education program.
- B. For students who are found eligible for gifted education, parents/guardians are asked to sign a form consenting to services.
- C. When a student is found ineligible for services, a letter is sent home which both explains the referral process and states that an appeal of the decision must be made in writing within 10 days of the letter's date.
- D. Changes in service options can be requested at any time by the parents/guardians or the gifted education coordinator. The interested party must contact the gifted coordinator to schedule a meeting. Changes agreed upon will be noted with an update in the appropriate cumulative file along with notification to classroom teachers.
- E. If for any reason a parent/guardian wishes to remove all service options or to remove the GIA or SAA gifted identification, the gifted education coordinator must be contacted in writing. Appropriate notice will be given to classroom teachers and annotated in the student's cumulative file.

Part V: Change in Instructional Services (8VAC20-40-60A.5)

This section includes the policy for written notification to parents or legal guardians of identification and placement decisions, including initial changes in placement procedures or exit policy from the program.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

Following an eligibility meeting at which the student was found eligible for gifted services, a student may be placed in the gifted education program upon signed written consent of the parent/guardian.

The placement of students in the ECPS gifted education program for GIS and SIA may be subject to periodic review. Prior to a change in placement, a conference will be held with the parent/guardian to discuss placement options. A change in placement may be recommended by the general education teacher, parent, student, administrator, or other appropriate staff. A change in placement may be recommended when the student's needs are no longer being met or the student is not successful in the placement.

A child may be removed from the gifted education program upon written request from a parent. Once the request is received, the student is placed on inactive status. For reinstatement, the parent must petition the gifted coordinator. Additional evaluation may be required for readmission.

Part VI: Evidence of Appropriate Service Options (8VAC20-40-60A.10)

This section provides evidence that gifted education service options from kindergarten through twelfth grade are offered continuously and sequentially, with instructional time during the school day and week to (i) work with their age-level peers, (ii) work with their intellectual and academic peers, (iii) work independently; and (iv) foster intellectual and academic growth of gifted students. Parents and legal guardians shall receive assessment of each gifted student's academic growth. Career and Technical aptitude programs and Visual and/or Performing Arts programs are offered at the discretion of the school division.

A. Service Options are Continuous and Sequential

This section provides evidence that the division's program of curricula and instruction for gifted learners is continuous and sequential. GIA programs need to provide evidence from kindergarten through twelfth grade. SAA programs need to provide evidence that service options are continuous and sequential from identification until twelfth grade.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

Services for students who are eligible for the gifted education program in the area of General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude are provided in K-12 general education classrooms in the form of differentiated curriculum and instruction. Activities involving critical thinking and higher-level processing skills are encouraged through differentiated instruction. Instruction may include small group or individual work. In addition, advanced materials related to Virginia Standards of Learning may be provided to enhance instruction.

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Grade Level	SAA – English and Mathematics	GIA
Grades K – 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction • Compacted math (5th grade) • Small group instruction with ITRT and Mathematics Instructional Specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction • Compacted math (5th grade) • Odyssey of the Mind • Middle Peninsula Regional Summer Governor’s School • Small group instruction with ITRT and Mathematics Instructional Specialist
Grades 6 – 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction • Accelerated math (6th grade) • Acceleration for high school credit: Algebra I • Small group instruction with ITRT and Mathematics Instructional Specialist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction • Accelerated math (6th grade) • Acceleration for high school credit: Algebra I • Odyssey of the Mind • Middle Peninsula Regional Summer Governor’s School • Small group instruction with ITRT and Mathematics Instructional Specialist
Grades 9 – 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Placement • Dual enrollment • Acceleration in mathematics • World History I • Chesapeake Bay Governor’s School • Odyssey of the Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Placement • Dual enrollment • Acceleration in mathematics • World History I • Chesapeake Bay Governor’s School • Odyssey of the Mind

At the upper intermediate and high school levels, students are counseled and encouraged to take classes with challenging and rigorous curriculum. Such classes include honors, dual enrollment, advance placement, the NNTC STEM Academy, and academic year Governor’s School classes (if the student meets the qualifications).

B. Service Options Provide Instructional Time with Age-level Peers

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies or program model that allows gifted students to interact with their age-level peers during the school day and week.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

Services for students who are eligible for the gifted education program in the area of General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude are conducted in classrooms with same-age peers. Gifted learners are provided opportunities for challenging work through differentiated instruction.

C. Service Options Provide Instructional Time with Intellectual and Academic Peers

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies used in the division to accelerate and enrich the content for gifted learners beyond the grade-level or course expectations for all learners. The description should include how these academic needs are met during the school day and week.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

Services for students who are eligible for the gifted education program in the area of General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude are conducted in classrooms with same-age peers. Gifted learners are provided opportunities for challenging work through differentiated instruction including small group instruction and instruction requiring a different or higher level of cognitive processing. Teachers may collaborate to provide instructional time with academic peers. Students may participate in programs such as Odyssey of the Mind, the Middle Peninsula Regional Summer Governor's School, the Chesapeake Bay Governor's School (competitive application process), and Summer Residential Governor's Schools (competitive application process).

D. Service Options Provide Instructional Time to Work Independently

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies or program model used in the division to allow gifted learners to work independently during the school day and week.

General and Specific Intellectual Aptitude

Instructional time to work independently may be a service option provided by classroom teachers when differentiating instruction. Some students may be provided independent work at a rigorous or challenging level.

E. Service Options Foster Intellectual and Academic Growth

This section includes a description of the instructional strategies used in the division to foster intellectual and academic growth during the school day and week.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

Differentiation of instruction at the elementary and lower intermediate levels may include alternative instructional assignments, rigorous assignments, assignments requiring a higher level of cognitive processing than the standard assignment, or enrichment activities. Teachers provide instruction and materials at an appropriate level. Differentiation of instruction at the upper intermediate and high school levels includes strategies similar to elementary and lower-intermediate differentiation of instruction and may also include more rigorous course placement. Such classes include dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, the NNTC STEM Academy, and Chesapeake Bay Governor's School (competitive application process).

F. Procedures for Assessing Academic Growth in Gifted Students

This section includes a description of the procedures used by the division to assess the academic growth for gifted learners.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

Systematic feedback provides consistent, regular evaluations of student's products, performance and knowledge acquisition.

Teachers:

- give performance feedback to students before, during and after instruction
- collect sufficient assessment data to support accurate reports of student progress
- provide opportunities for students to assess their own progress and performance
- use assessment of student progress to establish new learning goals

Assessment strategies used for documentation of student learning may include the following:

- norm-referenced tests
- authentic assessments (e.g., portfolios, projects, presentations, writing assessments, exhibitions)
- standards-based assessments (e.g., Virginia Standards of Learning)
- locally developed assessments (e.g., grade level, department, subject area assessments)
- teacher-made tests

When utilizing authentic assessments, teachers of the gifted:

- establish specific criteria for a quality product
- seek student input concerning product development and assessment
- provide benchmarks for product development and refinement
- include opportunities for evaluation by student, peers and/or teacher
- provide opportunities for student self-reflection

The Gifted Education Department continues to research best practices in assessment of academic growth of gifted students.

Part VII: Program of Differentiated Curriculum and Instruction (8VAC20-40-60A.11)

The *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students* defines appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction as curriculum and instruction adapted or modified to accommodate the accelerated learning aptitudes of identified students in their areas of strength. Such curriculum and instructional strategies provide accelerated and enrichment opportunities that recognize gifted students' needs for (i) advanced content and pacing of instruction; (ii) original research or production; (iii) problem finding and solving; (iv) higher level thinking that leads to the generation of products; and (v) a focus on issues, themes, and ideas within and across areas of study. Such curriculum and instruction are offered continuously and sequentially to support the achievement of student outcomes, and provide support necessary for these students to work at increasing levels of complexity that differ significantly from those of their age-level peers. This section provides a description of the school division's appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction demonstrating accelerated and advanced content for gifted learners.

General Intellectual Aptitude and Specific Academic Aptitude

The Essex County Gifted Education Program provides services for students identified as gifted in in both general and specific academic areas to develop academic aptitude through:

- curriculum differentiation
- enhanced and extended curriculum integrating multiple disciplines
- content acceleration
- instructional strategies

The program focuses on providing a curriculum based on rigorous academic content instruction while emphasizing a conceptual understanding of subject matter. Utilizing the Virginia Standards of Learning as a guide, the curriculum for the gifted is modified to

meet the distinct learning needs of gifted students in the content areas for which services are provided.

Curriculum differentiation creates an instructional environment, which actively engages students in learning and promotes continual growth respectful of individual differences. Students are encouraged to become self-directed, independent learners and to develop organizational, motivational and communication skills.

Student learning accentuates higher order processes incorporating critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving, decision-making, research, reasoning and metacognition. Learning experiences are created to allow for concept development through integrated content and in-depth study of major ideas, issues, and problems of interest to students.

The program consists of advanced content and appropriately differentiated instructional strategies to reflect the accelerative learning pace and advanced intellectual processes of gifted learners. Specifically, in designing qualitative differentiation for gifted students, teachers plan and carry out varied approaches to content, process, and product at an appropriate level and pace based on student differences in readiness, interest and learning needs.

A differentiated classroom may include the following:

Content:

- Eliminates previously learned materials and streamlines curriculum that can be mastered quickly
- Extends the prescribed curriculum utilizing advanced skills and concepts
- Presents content related to broad-based issues, problems or themes
- Integrates multiple disciplines into an area of study
- Organizes content to accentuate abstraction, complexity, challenge, depth, ambiguity, and open-ended nature of material

Process:

- Promotes in-depth investigation of teacher-selected and student-selected topics to accentuate the development and application of advanced research skills
- Provides opportunities for students to strengthen critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking and decision-making skills
- Fosters ongoing organizational, time management and perseverance skills
- Allows students opportunities to seek, define and solve complex real-world problems

Product:

- Allows students to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and understanding using varied modes of expression
- Encourages product development that challenges existing ideas and produces new solutions
- Establishes specific criteria for a quality product and provides ongoing assessment and feedback during product development

Students may participate in activities involving advanced content through differentiated classroom instruction or assignment to advanced high school courses. Students may participate in production of research projects through classroom or governor's school instruction. Activities involving critical thinking and higher-level processing skills are encouraged through differentiated instruction. Students may engage in projects that focus on issues of significance or interest to the individual student. Instruction may include small group or individual work. In addition, advanced materials related to Virginia Standards of Learning may be provided to enhance instruction. At the upper intermediate and high school levels, students are counseled and encouraged to take classes with challenging and rigorous curriculum. Such classes include honors, dual enrollment, Advanced Placement, the NNTC STEM Academy, and governor's school classes (if the student meets the qualifications).

Content-specific curriculum guides address learning opportunities at all levels of cognitive functioning. Differentiated curriculum will be identified on teacher weekly lesson plans. Differentiated learning opportunities include attention to process skills and higher-level thinking skills. Individual student career planning for course progression begins in grade 7 to map the student's academic interests and progression.

Part VIII: Policies and Procedures for Access to Programs and Advanced Courses (8VAC20-40-60A.12)

This section provides the school division's policies and procedures that allow access to programs of study and advanced courses at a pace and sequence commensurate with the learning needs of the gifted student.

Policy IGA: BASIC INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Because education is a lifelong process, the educational program shall provide both formal studies to meet the general academic needs of all students, and opportunities for individual students to develop specific talents and interests in career and technical and other specialized fields and grow toward independent learning.

The various instructional programs shall be developed with the view toward maintaining balanced, integrated, and sequentially articulated curricula which shall serve

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the educational needs of all school-aged children in the division.

The Essex School Board subscribes to the philosophy that well-developed reading and other basic skills, including the ability to spell, speak, and write intelligently are essential in society. It shall adopt specific requirements to ensure that high school graduates are sufficiently competent in these essential skills.

At all levels, provisions shall be made for a wide range of individual differences in student abilities and learning rates through uses of a variety of materials, adjustments in programs, and courses adapted to special needs of students.

The curriculum shall meet or exceed those requirements established by the Code of Virginia, the State Department of Education, and the State Board of Education. The curriculum will be aligned to the Standards of Learning.

Adopted: April 9, 2012

Policy IGBB: PROGRAMS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

The Essex County School Board shall approve a comprehensive plan for the education of gifted students that includes the components identified in Board of Education regulations. The plan for the education of gifted students shall be accessible through the division's website and the division will ensure that printed copies of the plan are available to citizens who do not have online access.

The school division has uniform procedures for screening, referring, identifying, and serving students in kindergarten through twelfth grade who are gifted in general intellectual or specific academic aptitude.

The school division will provide written notification to and seek written consent from parents and legal guardians to conduct any required assessment to determine a referred student's eligibility for the division's gifted education program, and provide services for an identified gifted student in the division's gifted education program. The School Board may establish a local advisory committee composed of parents, school personnel, and other community members appointed by the School Board. The committee will reflect the ethnic and geographical composition of the school division. If established, the committee will annually review the division's plan for the education of gifted students, including revisions, and determine the extent to which the plan for the previous year was implemented. The findings of the annual program effectiveness and the recommendations of the committee will be submitted annually in writing to the division superintendent and the School Board.

Adopted: July 19, 2012

Policy IGBI: ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Students and their parents shall be notified of the availability of dual enrollment, advanced placement classes, the International Baccalaureate program, and Academic Year Governor's School Programs, the qualifications for enrolling in such classes and

programs, and the availability of financial assistance to low-income and needy students to take the advanced placement and International Baccalaureate examinations. Students and their parents shall also be notified of the program with a community college to enable students to complete an associate's degree or a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies concurrent with a high school diploma. The superintendent shall promulgate regulations to implement this policy, which shall ensure the provision of timely and adequate notice to students and their parents.

Adopted: July 19, 2012

Part IX: Personal and Professional Development (8VAC20-40-60A.13)

School divisions must provide evidence of professional development based on the following teacher competencies outlined in 8VAC20-542-310 below.

1. Understanding of principles of the integration of gifted education and general education, including:
 - a. Strategies to encourage the interaction of gifted students with students of similar and differing abilities; and
 - b. Development of activities to encourage parental and community involvement in the education of the gifted, including the establishment and maintenance of an effective advisory committee.
2. Understanding of the characteristics of gifted students, including:
 - a. Varied expressions of advanced aptitudes, skills, creativity, and conceptual understandings;
 - b. Methodologies that respond to the affective (social-emotional) needs of gifted students; and
 - c. Gifted behaviors in special populations (i.e., those who are culturally diverse, economically disadvantaged, or physically disabled).
3. Understanding of specific techniques to identify gifted students using diagnostic and prescriptive approaches to assessment, including:
 - a. The selection, use, and evaluation of multiple assessment instruments and identification strategies;
 - b. The use of both subjective and objective measures to provide relevant information regarding the aptitude/ability or achievement of potentially gifted students;
 - c. The use of authentic assessment tools such as portfolios to determine performance, motivation/interest and other characteristics of potentially gifted students;
 - d. The development, use, and reliability of rating scales, checklists, and questionnaires by parents, teachers and others;
 - e. The evaluation of data collected from student records such as grades, honors, and awards;
 - f. The use of case study reports providing information concerning exceptional conditions; and
 - g. The structure, training, and procedures used by the identification and placement committee.

4. Understanding and application of a variety of educational models, teaching methods, and strategies for selecting materials and resources that ensure:
 - a. Academic rigor through the development of high-level proficiency in all core academic areas utilizing the Virginia Standards of Learning as a baseline;
 - b. The acquisition of knowledge and development of products that demonstrate creative and critical thinking as applied to learning both in and out of the classroom; and
 - c. The development of learning environments that guide students to become self-directed, independent learners.
5. Understanding and application of theories and principles of differentiating curriculum designed to match the distinct characteristics of gifted learners to the programs and curriculum offered to gifted students, including:
 - a. The integration of multiple disciplines into an area of study;
 - b. Emphasis on in-depth learning, independent and self-directed study skills and metacognitive skills;
 - c. The development of analytical, organizational, critical, and creative thinking skills;
 - d. The development of sophisticated products using varied modes of expression;
 - e. The evaluation of student learning through appropriate and specific criteria; and
 - f. The development of advanced technological skills to enhance student performance.
6. Understanding of contemporary issues and research in gifted education, including:
 - a. The systematic gathering, analyzing, and reporting of formative and summative data; and
 - b. Current local, state, and national issues and concerns.

Teachers in Essex County Public Schools participate annually in one or more of the following professional development opportunities related to gifted education:

- state or national seminars or conferences
- professional development opportunities provided by Essex County Public Schools
- professional readings that focus on techniques for identifying gifted students, models and strategies which promote academic rigor, principles of curriculum differentiation, social/emotional needs of gifted students, or other issues and concerns related to gifted education.

Teachers are encouraged to pursue the state endorsement in gifted education.

Part X: Procedures for Annual Review of Effectiveness (8VAC20-40-60A.14)

This section provides the procedures for the annual review of the effectiveness of the school division's gifted education program, including the review of screening, referral, identification, and program procedures toward the achievement of equitable representation of students, the review of student outcomes and the academic growth of gifted students. School divisions may decide to focus on one or more areas to review each

year. However, reviews shall be based on multiple criteria and shall include multiple sources of information.

The ECPS division gifted committee will review the gifted plan and gifted education program annually. The annual review will include:

Procedures for Equitable Referral and Identification of Students	Review of Student Outcomes	Academic Growth of Gifted Students
Collect and analyze referral and identification data to evaluate the effectiveness of revisions made to the Gifted Education Student Profiles	Collect and analyze student outcome data to evaluate the effectiveness of the Talent Development Model	Collect and analyze data which measures the academic growth of gifted students

Recommendations from the committee will be noted on the meeting minutes from the final meeting of each school year.

Part XI: Procedures for the Establishment of the Local Advisory Committee (8VAC20-40-60B)

Each school division may establish a local advisory committee composed of parents, school personnel, and other community members who are appointed by the school board. This committee shall reflect the ethnic and geographical composition of the school division. This section should include the school division’s procedures for the establishment of the local advisory committee for the gifted education program if the division has elected to establish a committee.

The Essex County Public Schools’ Local Gifted Advisory Committee will consist of a school administrator, gifted coordinator, and a minimum of one parent from each school, and the division level program administrator. Parents and community members will be invited to attend the meeting. Meetings will be held twice annually.

Part XII: Assurances (8VAC20-40-60A.6; A.7; A.8; A.9)

In accordance with the *Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students*, the following assurance must be provided by the school division:

- Assurances that student records are maintained in compliance with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations;

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- Assurances that (i) the selected and administered testing and assessment materials have been evaluated by the developers for cultural, racial, and linguistic biases; (ii) identification procedures are constructed so that those procedures may identify high potential or aptitude in any student whose accurate identification may be affected by economic disadvantages, by limited English proficiency, or by disability; (iii) standardized tests and other measures have been validated for the purpose of identifying gifted students; and (iv) instruments are administered and interpreted by trained personnel in conformity with the developer’s instructions;
- Assurances that accommodations or modifications determined by the school division’s special education Individual Education Plan (IEP) team, as required for the student to receive a free appropriate public education, shall be incorporated into the student’s gifted education services; and
- Assurances that a written copy of the school division’s approved local plan for the education of the gifted is available to parents or legal guardians of each referred student, and to others upon request.

Pursuant to these requirements, I hereby certify that the school division is in compliance with this language.

Dr. Harry R. Thomas, III 09-14-2020

Division Superintendent’s Signature

Printed Name

Date