

# High Ability Handbook

## Union-North United Schools

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# **Union-North United School Corporation**

## **High Ability Program**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Union-North United School Corporation has the mission of empowering and inspiring students to excel in academics, service, leadership, and personal growth. We provide high ability students with intentional, enhanced learning opportunities in order to challenge, empower, and enrich intellectual, social, and emotional growth. It is the focus of all educators at Union-North United Schools to instill upon students the importance of becoming lifelong learners, competitive employees, and responsible citizens in a global society.

### **INDIANA STATE CODE AND DEFINITION OF HIGH ABILITY**

Per IC 20-10.1-5.1-2, the state of Indiana defines high ability (gifted) students as “one who performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests.”

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GIFTED CHILD

Although there are many definitions of giftedness, according to the National Association of Gifted Children, gifted children do have many common characteristics. It is important to note however, that there is a distinction between a child who is bright and does well in school versus a truly gifted child. This chart distinguishes some of those characteristics.

<b>A Bright Child</b>	<b>A Gifted Child</b>
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Has good ideas	Has wild, silly ideas
Works hard	Plays around, yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail; elaborates
Top group	Beyond the group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings and opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	1-2 times for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meanings	Draws inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies information accurately	Creates new designs
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good memorizer	Good guesser
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with own learning	Is very self-critical
Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation	Thrives on complexity

## DISTRICT SERVICES FOR HIGH ABILITY STUDENTS GRADES K-12

**Elementary K-6:** Students identified as High Ability at LaVille Elementary participate in cluster grouping and are served within the regular classrooms in K-6. These classrooms have teachers who have had training in differentiating the instruction while providing the rigor necessary to meet the needs of the high ability students. In addition, depending on the individual student's needs, the elementary students have the opportunity for vertical articulation to other grade levels for the designated academic area for additional needs in acceleration. There is a recommended curriculum at each grade level for cluster teachers to access.

**Middle 7-8:** Students identified as High Ability at LaVille Junior High are in self-contained classrooms for math and English/Language Arts. Accelerated math students take Pre-Algebra in 6th grade, Algebra in 7th and Geometry in the 8th grade. Accelerated language arts students take Honors English.

**High School 9-12:** LaVille High School offers honors classes, AP classes, Dual Enrollment, and Tech Honors. These courses challenge high ability students and prepare them for their continued advanced studies at a post-secondary institution.

## MULTIFACETED IDENTIFICATION PLAN AND POLICY FOR DETERMINING PLACEMENT

### Kindergarten-Identification

In the second semester, kindergarten students take CogAT, a nationally normed test of aptitude designed to measure students' learned reasoning abilities in the three areas most linked to academic success in school: verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal. In addition, students will be taking a state approved achievement test in reading/language arts and math. The scores obtained during the winter assessment will be used, along with the CogAT scores to identify students' potential placement. Students scoring at the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile or above (the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile is recommended by the Indiana Department of Education and correlates to the 9<sup>th</sup> stanine—the highest tier of performance) on the verbal and/or quantitative portions of CogAT, or scoring at the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile on an achievement test in Reading/Language Arts and/or the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile on an achievement test in Math, will be placed in a high ability program for their placement in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Depending on test scores students may be placed in language arts, mathematics or both content areas. It is important to note, especially in the youngest grades (K-2), cognitive growth can be inconsistent and placement may not be permanent.

Students who score between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on Reading/Language Arts achievement tests and between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on Math achievement tests along with CogAT scores between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, will be screened further using SIGS (Scales for Identifying Gifted Students).

### **Grades 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>-Identification**

In the second semester, students in grades 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, will take CogAT, a nationally normed test of aptitude designed to measure students' learned reasoning abilities in the three areas most linked to academic success in school: verbal, quantitative and nonverbal. In addition, these same grades will be taking state approved achievement tests in reading/language arts and math. The scores obtained during the winter assessment will be used, along with the CogAT scores to identify students' potential placement for their following academic year. Students scoring at the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile or above (the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile is recommended by the Indiana Department of Education and correlates to the 9<sup>th</sup> stanine—the highest tier of performance) on the verbal and/or quantitative portions of CogAT, or scoring at the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile on achievement tests in Reading/Language Arts and/or the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile on achievement tests in Math will be placed in the high ability program. Depending on test scores students may be placed in language arts, mathematics or both content areas. Utilizing a multifaceted assessment process, which includes qualitative, as well as quantitative data, and is recommended by the state, gives our high ability programmers sufficient data to correctly identify and appropriately place high ability students.

Students who score between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on Reading/Language Arts achievement tests and between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on Math achievement tests along with CogAT scores between the 80<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, will be screened further using SIGS (Scales for Identifying Gifted Students).

### **Grades 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>- Identification**

By the time that students matriculate to the high school, high ability placement has typically been determined. The primary data used for advanced placement in grades 9-11 at Union-North Schools include the most recent PSAT scores, in conjunction with NWEA scores, if available, in the areas of Quantitative Reasoning for Math and Science placement and Verbal for English placement. In addition, performance in current classes is reviewed. Exceptional performance in general education classes alone without supporting standardized data will not meet the criteria for high ability approval.

## GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

### **Elementary**

Kindergarten through sixth grade students increase their understanding about themselves through the reading and discussion of materials dealing with issues such as socializing in appropriate ways, perfectionism, hiding one's abilities, taking appropriate risks, and accepting differences. These students are also taught organizational techniques, time management strategies, and study skills that help them become more effective students. For students who struggle with their peers socially, deal with chronic study issues or management problems, assistance can be provided through the assistance of a high ability coordinator or school counselor. Lessons may be addressed to the whole class, if appropriate, so that our youngest learners are growing in their understanding of high ability education.

### **Middle School**

Individual assistance may be available for middle school students who are highly able and are having social or academic difficulties. Strategies for organization and time management can be continued at the middle school level by each high ability team of teachers or the grade level counselor. Counselors are also available to work individually with students who have difficulties with the social issues related to their giftedness. Motivation, perfectionism, etc. can all be addressed through individual and small group counseling sessions.

### **High School**

The high school guidance counselors work with students in scheduling appropriately challenging classes or by introducing the student to alternative educational providers. Guidance counselors are available for individual counseling in grades 9-12.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Every year there are multiple opportunities for educators, K-12, at Union-North United Schools to attend local workshops on differentiated instruction for high ability students. Teachers are invited and encouraged to attend the state IAG Conference (Indiana Association for the Gifted) which directly addresses multifaceted strategies to meet the needs of high ability students. These conferences and any workshops sponsored through the Educational Service Centers and other organizations related to high ability studies are readily available throughout the year. In an effort to promote and support differentiated instruction, teachers are provided opportunities to develop differentiated lessons, to

collaborate with fellow teachers in the development of differentiated projects, or to improve the curriculum. Administrators may also attend workshops and programs pertaining to the education of highly able students. Finally, teachers are encouraged to participate and share with staff their new-found information from these conferences. This is done in whole group and small group discussions so other educators can learn the best practices in high ability education. There are opportunities to attend self-selected workshops and seminars on progressive approaches to high ability education.

## **PROCEDURES FOR NEW STUDENTS**

Parents of new students should indicate on enrollment paperwork whether or not their child has participated in high ability programming at a previous school. Parents should supply supporting data from a previous school district or private testing to determine if the child fits a profile of a student to be tested for Union-North United High Ability programming. If appropriate, a child may then be invited to an assessment session to determine eligibility for our programs. Placement in a previous district is not an automatic placement in UNUSC high ability, as districts often have different measures and criteria for placement. The assessments used to determine placement for new students will be the same as those used for identification of current UNUSC students.

## **BROAD BASED PLANNING COMMITTEE PURPOSE**

Each school year, a group of stakeholders (educators, administrators, parents, and students) meet to discuss the Union-North United School Corporation High Ability program. This Broad Based Planning Committee meets yearly to examine the mission of our schools and determine if the high ability program is meeting the needs of these exceptional learners. Programming effectiveness is examined, goals are developed, state requirements are reviewed and revisions are discussed.

The Broad Based Planning Committee is also responsible for directing and conducting the evaluative process, reviewing and updating the current program plan of improvement annually. Program evaluation is systematic with the following areas evaluated on a regular basis: beliefs and goals, student identification and placement, curriculum and instruction, and program design. The evaluation process requires the committee to focus on concerns and critical questions which utilizes the data gathering process. The information collection



strategies used are discussions, interviews, standardized test results, and other sources of information. Based on the analysis of the data collected, the BBPC formulates a plan of action to improve the overall program for high ability students.

## **STUDENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND EXIT PROCEDURE**

Students who are not successful in a high ability placement may be exited from the program at any time. This process may be initiated by the school or by the parent. Before a student is removed from programming, a committee made up of the parent, classroom teacher, high ability coordinator, and school administrator/counselor, will meet to establish a Student Improvement Plan. The goal of the Improvement Plan is to set forth interventions, which will assist the student in being successful in the high ability placement. Improvement steps will be identified, a timeline will be set for completion, and then the committee will reconvene to determine the success of the plan. If improvements have been made, additional supports can be added to continue the placement. If the interventions have not assisted the student in being successful, then the student may be exited from the program. Copies of Student Improvement Plans and Exit Procedure Forms are available through communication with the High Ability Coordinator.

## **APPEAL PROCESS**

As stated in the Identification Plan and Policy, a parent of a student who requests reconsideration is asked to complete an appeal form stating the reasons why he/she feels that the student should be identified for high ability. This reconsideration request cannot be based on ISTEP scores (pass plus) or classroom grades. Those are just indicators of mastery of the current subject area.

The identification committee will review the student's record and the appeal form, and inform the parent in writing of the decision. Copies of the appeal form are available through contacting the High Ability Coordinator at (574) 784-2311. Parents or guardians, on behalf of their child, may appeal decisions regarding identification, participation, or program options. Complaints and grievances are best handled and should be resolved as close to their origin as possible. Therefore, the proper channel of complaints for high ability program placement will be as follows:

- 1) Classroom Teacher

- 2) High Ability Coordinator
- 3) Building Principal/Guidance Counselor (high school)
- 4) Broad Based Planning Committee

The BBPC will provide input regarding the high ability program design, student identification process, curriculum and instruction, as well as the professional development, which occurs for staff members. This committee will meet at a minimum twice per year. The Broad Based Planning Committee may recommend that the programs or services are inappropriate or appropriate. The decision of the committee will be final.

## HIGH ABILITY PROGRAM RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

[National Association for Gifted Children](#)

[Indiana Association for the Gifted](#)

[Hoagies' Gifted Education](#)

Information about gifted students and gifted education as well as links to a variety of other sites.

[Gifts for Learning](#)

A site with suggested books for gifted children and their parents as well as recommended toys for gifted children. Has advice and suggestions for parents.

[GT-World](#)

An online support community for parents of Gifted and Talented children.

[Gifted Development Center](#)

Dr. Linda Silverman's center in Denver, Colorado.