

# WESTERN SCHOOL CORPORATION



HIGH ABILITY PROGRAM MANUAL

## **PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK**

The information in this handbook describes the high ability academic programming, selection criteria, and procedures offered at Western School Corporation. The purpose of this handbook is to provide a resource to parents and staff for use in understanding the corporation's procedures and program offerings for high ability students.

## **CORPORATION OVERVIEW**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Western School Corporation is to educate and inspire today's students for tomorrow's opportunities.

### **Definition of High Ability**

Western School Corporation defines high ability students as those who require services and educational experiences not ordinarily offered in the regular school curriculum in order to develop demonstrated or potential aptitude, leadership, and creativity.

An accelerated student means one who is capable of working at or above grade level at a faster pace due to ability, work ethic, or sheer determination.

Indiana Code 20-36-1 defines a high ability student 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."

### **Values**

In order to cooperatively create an active and effective learning environment, students are held to high standards with a variety of content-rich programs and a curriculum that prepares our students for post-secondary educational opportunities, work, life, and to be responsible citizens in a global society. The curriculum is student-centered, data driven, technology rich, and based on the standards for academic achievement and excellence.

Instruction is:

- differentiated to maximize achievement for all learners
- comprehensive to ensure student readiness for post-secondary and career readiness
- engaging to create life-long learners
- adaptive to develop the skills necessary for a changing world

### **Corporation Philosophy and Guiding Principles**

Western School Corporation believes that children with high ability...

- Are present in all ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups, and have exceptional educational aptitude and needs.
- Exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:
  - General intellectual ability
  - Specific academic aptitude
  - Creative and/or productive thinking
  - Responsible leadership qualities
- Respond to special programs, which assist them in the development of special abilities.

### **District Goals for the High Ability Program**

The goals for students in the high ability programs offered at Western School Corporation are as follows:

Students will:

1. master basic skills while partaking in differentiated curricula and/or instruction to accelerate and/or enrich their knowledge in specific academic areas,
2. explore a diversity of differentiated experiences, which develop high level thought processes,
3. develop advanced study skills through the application of independence, self-direction, and self-evaluation,
4. analyze, evaluate, and apply research to develop high quality products,
5. utilize 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, and
6. increase their understanding and respect for individuals with varying ability levels through the development of communication skills and interaction with diverse people.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

High Ability students need differentiated content, process, and product. For optimum learning the product should be flexible, the content must be extended in depth and complexity, and the processes should emphasize creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

High Ability instruction should provide assignments at varying levels of complexity and challenge while focusing on the same basic concept or learning experiences in the standard curriculum.

Western School Corporation offers a broad range of courses and academic experiences that are the result of continual refinement of curriculum and diary maps. Technology integration is also a key component.

At the high school level, students may enroll in Honors, Dual Credit, and Advanced Placement courses, all of which are on a weighted grading scale. Please consult the Western School Corporation Course Description Guide for more information on the high school course offerings as well as the Core 40 with Academic Honors Diploma requirements.

At the middle school level, Advanced Language Arts, Advanced Math (advanced 1 grade level), Advanced Science, and Advanced Social Studies are offered to those students who qualify. In 8<sup>th</sup> grade, the highest achieving students are enrolled in Honors Algebra I and also have the opportunity to enroll in a World Language for high school credit.

At the elementary level in grades 1-5, students identified as high ability are provided enriched instruction in self-contained classrooms pertaining to the area(s) of eligibility in Language Arts and/or Mathematics. Kindergarten students receive differentiated instruction in a mixed abilities classroom.

All courses are based on the Indiana College and Career Readiness Academic Standards. Differentiation is achieved by modifying the content, process, or products in a course and by using such strategies as anchoring activities, compacting curriculum, flexible groupings, and accelerating the pace of instruction.

## **Program Assessment**

The corporation's Broad Based Planning Committee (BBPC) meets quarterly during the school year and determines areas for focus, improvement, and/or growth. The committee consists of classroom teachers at the elementary

and secondary levels, building principals, a school board member, and parent as well as student representatives.

ISTEP+ data, including Pass+ results, NWEA data, AP exam scores, along with parent surveys to formulate goals and make program adjustments as needed.

## **HIGH ABILITY IDENTIFICATION**

The following procedures were established to guide decisions on how to best meet the instructional needs of students. Students who meet the placement criteria possess a level of skills and knowledge that is significantly beyond that of their peer group and require a unique educational experience to develop their full potential. Western School Corporation assesses all students for high ability placement in Kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Western students beyond grade 3 may be eligible for high ability placement should they perform at, or show the potential for performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain. ISTEP+ data, NWEA results, and teacher or parent recommendation may be taken into consideration. A student new to Western may be assessed as well for high ability consideration at any grade level. Academic placement decisions may be modified in accordance with changes in students' learning profiles as they progress through elementary and middle school.

Because there are multiple pathways to being identified, this greater range of achievement levels necessitates the provision of a range of services, not one single program. Some will need high ability services in just on subject area and some will need services in more areas. Some may need to be sent to another grade or a different class at the same grade for a subject. This is consistent with many school services recognizing individual needs. Therefore, depending on the type of services to be provided, placing a student in services for high ability may not be different from the placement of any other student in the appropriate level of instruction according to their needs. High ability services at Western School Corporation are flexible to meet the individual needs of the students.

The Indiana Department of Education suggests multiple pathways for high ability identification including:

### **For High Ability Identification in Math**

- Through Potential: An outstanding score (96<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher) on a norm-referenced measure of quantitative reasoning
- Through Performance: An outstanding score (96<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher) on a norm-reference measure of math achievement

- Through Additional Data: When a child's score on either the norm referenced measure of achievement or reasoning falls **just** below the cutoff, additional data in the form of teacher rating scales, classroom work samples, or other district assessment data will be reviewed to determine appropriate placement.

### **For High Ability Identification in Language Arts**

- Through Potential: An outstanding score (96<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher) on a norm-referenced measure of verbal reasoning
- Through Performance: An outstanding score (96<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher) on a norm-referenced measure of reading and language achievement
- Through Additional Data: When a child's score on either the norm referenced measure of achievement or reasoning falls **just** below the cutoff, additional data in the form of teacher rating scales, classroom work samples, or other district assessment data will be reviewed to determine appropriate placement.

### **Kindergarten**

All kindergarten students will be administered the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in the spring to assist with identifying students as high ability for a 1<sup>st</sup> grade placement. A Standard Age Score (SAS) of 128 or 96<sup>th</sup> percentile would be used to identify a student through the "potential" pathway. If a child's scores fall just below the cutoff, "additional data" would be used for a high ability placement determination. A student could be identified for a high ability placement through "performance" on DIBELS and other norm-referenced measures with a score in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher.

### **Grade 2**

All students will be administered the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) in the spring to assist with identifying students as high ability for a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade placement through the "potential" pathway. The IOWA Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) will also be administered to all students in the spring to assist with identifying students for a high ability placement through the "performance" pathway. DIBELS data, teacher input, and work samples may be used as well for identification through the "additional data" pathway. Students previously placed in high ability may continue in the program if their performance meets expectations.

## **Grade 3 - 8**

All grade screening using relevant data such as CogAT, OLSAT, NWEA and ILEARN assessments along with rating scales, work samples, etc. is reviewed for possible placement in high ability or honors courses.

## **Grades 9 -12**

Students previously placed in high ability may be placed in honors courses if their performance meets the prerequisite requirements and expectations. Additionally, students are screened for Honors, Advanced Placement, College Prep, and Dual Credit placements through student performance and ability to work at an advanced or accelerated pace, parent or student request, teacher input, as well as previous standardized assessments or NWEA scores.

### **HIGH ABILITY PROGRAM ORGANIZATION & FORMAT**

#### **Kindergarten**

- Follow grade level Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master maps for English/LA, Social Studies, Science, and Mathematics
- Differentiated instruction
- On-going assessment
- Enrichment activities
- All-grade screen for ability in the spring to determine high ability placement for grade 1.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Grade**

- English/LA, Social Studies, and Science – follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master maps at grade level with enrichment and higher order thinking skills
- Mathematics – follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master map for accelerated math.
- Differentiated instruction
- Cluster group based on ability

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Grade**

- English/LA, Social Studies, and Science – follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master maps at grade level with enrichment and higher order thinking skills
- Mathematics – follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master map for accelerated math.
- Differentiated instruction
- Cluster group based on ability

- All-grade screen for ability and achievement in the spring to determine high ability placement for grade 3.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade**

- Self-contained English/LA, Social Studies, and Science – follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master maps at grade level with enrichment and higher order thinking skills
- Self-contained Mathematics – follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master map for accelerated math. Students will complete content one grade level above.
- Differentiated instruction
- Cluster group based on ability
- Opportunity for instruction extended in depth and complexity beyond the standard curriculum content. Incorporate service-learning, real-world application and problem-solving.

### **Middle School**

- Advanced/accelerated courses for English/LA, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics
  - Follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master maps at grade level (exception – Mathematics, see below) with extended opportunity for accelerated, enriched, challenging, and differentiated instruction that is extended in depth and complexity beyond the standard curriculum content. Incorporate service-learning, real-world application and problem solving
    - Mathematics
      - Grade 6 – follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master map for grade 7 Mathematics.
      - Grade 7 - follow Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master map for Pre-Algebra.
      - Grade 8 - follow Indiana Academic Standards and the high school curriculum master map for Algebra I. Students completing the course will receive high school math elective credit. Students completing Algebra I at the eighth grade are expected to complete eight (8) additional credits of mathematics once in high school.
    - Utilize critical, logical, analytical, and creative-thinking skills beyond what is expected in the standard curriculum
    - Connect real life Mathematics through the Science curriculum for relevance and problem solving



## High School

- Courses follow the Indiana Academic Standards and curriculum master maps at grade/course level with extended opportunity for accelerated, enriched, challenging, and differentiated instruction that is extended in depth and complexity beyond the standard curriculum content. Incorporate real world application and problem solving.
- Utilize critical, logical, analytical, and creative-thinking skills beyond what is expected in the standard curriculum.
- Connect real life Mathematics through the Science curriculum for relevance and problem solving
- **Courses Available**
  - English
    - English 9 Honors
    - English 10 Honors
    - English 11 Honors
    - Advanced College Project Literature
    - Advanced College Project Composition
    - English Literature; Advanced Placement
  - Mathematics
    - Honors Geometry
    - Honors Algebra II
    - Honors Pre-Calculus/Trigonometry
    - Calculus; Advanced Placement
    - Statistics; Advanced Placement
    - Advanced College Project Calculus
  - Science
    - Honors Biology
    - Biology; Advanced Placement
    - Anatomy and Physiology; Dual Credit
    - Advanced College Project Chemistry
    - Honors Chemistry
    - Honors Physics
  - Social Studies
    - United States History; Advanced Placement
  - Art
    - Studio Art; Advanced Placement
    - 2-D Design Art; Advanced Placement
  - World Languages
    - Honors Spanish, Japanese, French IV
    - Japanese; Advanced Placement
  - Business
    - Computer Programming I & II; Dual Credit
    - Information, Communications, and Technology; Dual Credit
    - Computer Science; Advanced Placement

- Industrial Technology
  - Introduction to Manufacturing; Dual Credit
  - Advanced Manufacturing; Dual Credit

## **HIGH ABILITY IDENTIFICATION APPEALS PROCEDURE**

The high ability identification team uses a well-designed process, consistent with Indiana Code and rules, based upon sound measures designed for use with high ability learners in order to find those students whose academic needs are far beyond those of typical students of the same age in our corporation. In this process, students are identified for services through multiple pathways including ability and/or achievement in Language Arts and/or Math.

An appeal process is in place in the event the identification team does not place a child in services and a teacher, parent, or other person close to the child challenges this decision. An official written appeal must be filed with the building principal no later than two weeks following the notification of test results.

An appeal does not re-evaluate student data already considered in the official identification process. Scoring at the Pass Plus level on ISTEP+, high grades, or strong performance on classroom benchmark assessments are not valid reasons for an appeal. The purpose of the appeal is to bring new information to the attention of the committee that could lead to a different decision. The request of appeal must be accompanied by the following documentation and/or samples of student work that demonstrate the student's competency in achievement and/or aptitude.

- **Achievement** – Please include documentation and/or samples of student work that demonstrate reading, writing, and speaking skills far beyond the performance of typical peers. Documentation could include examples such as advanced vocabulary, sophisticated syntax, unusual or novel language use, and/or interpretive analysis of complex literary and non-fiction tests. In the area of mathematics, documentation could include examples such as the student's ability to apply ideas from one mathematical problem to another, use of creative or unusual strategies to solve mathematical problems, success with advanced-level mathematical concepts, and/or knowledge about a variety of mathematical topics.
- **Aptitude** – Documentation and/or samples of student work that demonstrate general intellectual ability far beyond the performance/behavior of typical peers could include examples of excellent reasoning ability, analysis of issues from many points of

view, ability to reach good conclusions based on evidence, ability to rapidly understand novel tasks, and tendency to seek answers to questions (curiosity). Outside aptitude testing will be accepted but is not mandatory, at the expense of the parents. The test must be administered by a licensed psychologist in private practice and not affiliated with a particular public or private school. The recommended tests are the current versions of the Stanford Binet or the WISC IV.

Following review, a thoughtful decision on a case-by-case, individual basis that is in the best interest of the student will be made and a letter will be sent to the parents with a program determination. All decisions are final.

Students who are approved for a high ability program through the appeal process must demonstrate their ability to succeed in the course. Students who experience difficulty with the pace or rigor of the course, are unable to maintain an appropriate grade average, fail to demonstrate academic progress, or do not meet any of the other course expectations may be reassigned to a regular or advanced level course at the discretion of the principal. Reassignment may occur at any time during the school year or at the end of the year to take effect the following school year. Efforts will be made to make any transitions at the end of grading periods or semesters if possible.

### **HIGH ABILITY PROGRAM EXIT PROCEDURES**

A student's admission and continuation in the high ability program is based on several factors, including test scores, classroom performance/grades, task commitment, participation, teacher/parent input, and overall academic progress and benefit to the student. High ability programs are designed to meet the needs of high-performing students. Phone calls, parent-teacher conferences, written communications, and data review with team to include classroom teacher(s) and Principal, should occur first to resolve concerns about the student's participation in the high ability program.

The student, parent, or teacher may request a re-evaluation of the student's progress and placement within the high ability program by submitting an Exit Request Form to the building principal if concerns continue and have not been resolved by initial communications.

Once the exit request has been initiated, the parent, student (if appropriate), teacher, counselor (if appropriate), and building principal will meet. The teacher will bring samples of work and/or other documentation in the areas of concern. A written intervention plan, including the duration of the plan, not less than one grading period, will be created. The teacher will

communicate the student's progress to the parents throughout the intervention period, including a formal written report midway through the intervention period. At the end of the period, the student's classroom performance will be re-evaluated in a second meeting of the same individuals. Every effort should be made to assist the student with strategies to help him/her be successful in the high ability program both at school and at home.

If after the second meeting, the committee determines that the student should be withdrawn from the high ability program, the teacher and/or counselor will communicate plans for a smooth and timely transition to the general education classroom. Any disagreement with the placement decision may be submitted in writing to the Director of Exceptional Learners and Testing within five (5) school days of the second meeting. The Director of Exceptional Learners and testing will meet with the parents and building principal by phone or in person and render a final decision by mail.

# HIGH ABILITY EXIT REQUEST FORM

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_\_\_\_ CLASSROOM TEACHER(S) \_\_\_\_\_

PERSON INITIATING REQUEST \_\_\_\_\_ Student \_\_\_\_\_ Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher

Reason(s) for requesting exit from the high ability program:

Steps completed prior to this request (submit evidence along with this form):

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone Calls

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent-teacher conference(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Written communication

\_\_\_\_\_ Data Review

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (specify)

Other comments or relevant information:

Signature of Person Making Request \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# HIGH ABILITY INTERVENTION PLAN

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees:

Academic and/or behavioral performance in which progress is needed:

Interventions to be implemented by the school to support the student in areas listed above:

Interventions to be implemented at home to support the student in the areas identified above:

Dates of intervention period: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Midpoint Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Conference #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## MIDPOINT TEACHER REPORT OF STUDENT PROGRESS

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Student progress in the areas listed in the intervention plan:

Further recommendations, if any, to assist the student in making the needed progress to be successful within the program:

Principal Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date mailed to parent \_\_\_\_\_

# HIGH ABILITY REEVALUATION DETERMINATION

STUDENT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

CONFERENCE #1 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CONFERENCE #2 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

After implementing and reviewing the intervention plan, the committee has determined that the student should:

\_\_\_\_\_ continue in the High Ability program

\_\_\_\_\_ exit the High Ability program effective \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Principal Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Director of Exceptional Learner's and Testing Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***Does the ability test tell me whether or not my child is truly gifted?***

It is very difficult to ascertain a student's level of giftedness because there are many definitions of giftedness. However, the Indiana Department of Education instructs districts to identify students who perform, or show potential to perform, at an outstanding level of accomplishment when compared to students of the same age, experience, or environment. These students require differentiated curriculum, instruction and/or programming options during regular school hours in order to best meet their academic needs. While we have many high performing students at Western School Corporation, most of their needs can be effectively met within the general education classroom even though they may perform very well on standardized tests, which compare them to other students in the state and nation. We recognize that our students are gifted in a variety of ways, but the focus of the high ability program is to identify and serve students who have a high general intellect as well as strengths in language arts and math.

### ***What does my child's score mean?***

The raw score (number of questions answered correctly on the test) for each test is converted to a percentile rank (PR). A PR is an indicator of where a student's performance fits within the performance of other students of the same age or grade. PRs are placed on a scale of 1 to 99 that indicates the percentage of students of the same age or grade group who obtained the same score or lower on a test. For example, a student scoring at the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile rank scored as well as, or better than, 40 percent of students in the norm group. It also means that 60 percent of the students exceeded this score. PRs do not indicate the percentage of questions a student answered correctly.

PRs are placed on a curve, so it is important to keep in mind that PRs are much more compactly arranged in the middle of the curve since that is where the majority of students fall. For example, the difference of 5 percentile points between a PR of 50 and a PR of 55 is insignificant; however, a difference of 5 percentile points between a PR of 90 and a PR of 95 is very significant. A percentile rank is useful in identifying students for high ability programs because it represents how well a student performs compared to other students in the test's nationwide norm sample.

### ***What does the ability test measure?***

The ability test is a group administered ability test designed to measure students' learned reasoning abilities in the three cognitive domains most closely related to success in school: verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, and nonverbal reasoning. These reasoning abilities play an

important role in reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, and problem solving. The test may include any or all of the following three batteries:

- The Verbal Battery measures students' abilities to reason with verbal concepts. These reasoning abilities play an important role in reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing, and virtually all verbal learning tasks.
- The Quantitative Battery measures students' abilities to reason with quantitative symbols and concepts. These reasoning skills are significantly related to problem solving in mathematics and other disciplines.
- The Nonverbal Battery measures students' abilities to reason with geometric shapes and figures. To perform successfully, students must invent and implement strategies for solving novel problems.

***If my child does not qualify for the high ability program, how will that affect his/her futures opportunities?***

Your child will receive a strong academic experience in the regular classroom and, if he/she excels, may have an opportunity to be considered for a high ability class next year. Each year assessment data is reviewed and students with exceptional performance will be contacted. Sometimes additional time to mature and develop improves a student's performance on the high ability testing. All students, including those who are not placed in the high ability program during elementary and middle school, have the opportunity to enroll in Honors, Advanced Placement, and Dual Credit courses at Western High School, depending on their grades, performance on various assessments, and personal academic goals.

***What do I do if I feel that my child's scores do not reflect his/her true talent?***

The ability test is a standardized and nationally normed assessment, but as with all tests, a student might earn a slightly higher or lower score if he/she retook the same test again. Therefore, the identification process involves consideration of the test's reliability by taking into account its standard error measurement.

If you feel that your child's scores do not accurately portray his/her talent, you should discuss your concerns with your child's teacher(s) and/or counselor to seek their perspectives and advice. If a student does not qualify and after careful thought and consideration, you still believe your child's best interests would be served in the high ability program, you may submit an application for appeal. The appeal process is designed to allow highly motivated students whose test scores are close to the qualifying score

an opportunity to participate in a more rigorous curriculum if the student truly desires and can succeed in an environment of greater challenge.

**Given the rigor and accuracy of the placement tests, an appeal should be exercised only in instances where classroom performance clearly and substantially indicates that your child is performing at an outstanding level compared to his/her peers.**

***How do I submit an appeal for high ability placement?***

The appeal application must be submitted to the appropriate building principal within 2 weeks of receiving test results. The principal will consider the evidence submitted as well as other available data and input from the student's teacher(s) and/or counselor. If appropriate, the principal will confer with the Director of Exceptional Learning and Testing. Forms and additional information on the appeal process may be obtained from the building principal or from the High Ability Handbook.

You must submit documentation and/or samples of student work that demonstrate your child's competency in aptitude and/or reading achievement as outlined in the appeal process. Testing from an outside source will be considered, but Western School Corporation is not responsible for any costs incurred if a parent chooses to obtain information in this way.

Please note that placement decisions are reversed only in instances where extensive documentation is presented providing sufficient evidence that your child's knowledge, skills, and abilities are superior to those demonstrated on the ability test and classroom achievement. The decision of the appeal is final. If a student is placed in a high ability course on appeal and experiences difficulty with the pace or rigor of course or is unable to maintain an appropriate grade average, he/she may be reassigned to the appropriate general education course at the discretion of the school to ensure that academic progress is maintained.