

## Highly Capable Program Parent/Guardian Handbook 2018-2019

### Table of Contents:

- 1) Background
- 2) Attributes of Highly Capable Students
- 3) Identification Procedures
- 4) Program Design and Delivery
- 5) Differentiation in the General Education Classroom
- 6) Building Highly Capable Plans
- 7) Student Learning Plans
- 8) Counseling for Highly Capable Students at the Secondary Level
- 9) Program Evaluation
- 10) FAQs

### District Support Staff for Highly Capable Program:

Sonia Barry  
Assistant Director Student Services  
[sbarry@nkschools.org](mailto:sbarry@nkschools.org)  
(360) 396-3018

Susan Hoke  
Secretary  
[shoke@nkschools.org](mailto:shoke@nkschools.org)  
(360) 396-3561

### Background (1)

In 2013, OSPI provided us with new WAC's (codes/laws) pertaining to the education of highly capable students in our public schools. For the first time, all districts are required to have a "Highly Capable Program." NKSD had a program already, but it only served kids in grades 3-8. Districts were allowed to use 2013-2014 as a transitional year. Beginning with 2014-2015, all parts of the new law must be met.

One of the critical aspects of the law is teacher training. Teachers who work with highly capable students must receive ongoing training. In NKSD, our students are highly integrated into general education classrooms, so training all of our teachers makes sense. This handbook is one aspect of that training. Training teachers receive on the instructional frameworks, common core state standards and PLC are especially relevant for work with highly capable students. Many teachers also have had the opportunity to receive more specialized trainings which build their skills in differentiation, inquiry, classroom management, and integration of curriculum between content areas.

Under the new law, the efforts teachers make to differentiate, group students, or accelerate based on assessment data are a part of highly capable students' basic education. This distinction is common sense, but it puts new urgency into our efforts to answer Question 4 for our students. Happily, PLCs in NKSD are already doing most of this work. Changes to the Highly Capable Program should not require teachers to do many new things, or take focus off of students who are struggling. Teachers who plan effectively, collaborate and hold high expectations for all students are already serving highly capable students well.

## **Attributes of Highly Capable Students (2)**

Terminology is important in this area: Here are some working definitions for NKSD

**Highly Capable:** This label is assigned to students who have been selected for the Highly Capable Program. A flag appears by their name on Skyward. Highly capable students are students who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels when compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments. Outstanding abilities are seen within students' general intellectual aptitudes, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific domain. These students are present not only in the general populace, but are present within all protected classes. Typically, these students perform in the top 5 percentile academically or on cognitive measures compared with students nationally or in their peer group.

**Characteristics of Highly Capable Students:** Teachers should be on the lookout for the following characteristics. Students may exhibit some or many of these. Knowledge of these characteristics can give insight into behaviors and provide clues for intervention.

### **Intellectual Characteristics**

- Intense absorption in listening, observing or doing
- Highly curious; wants to know and dig deeper **OR** questions authority; unwilling to follow rules
- Varied interests and likes to spend time beyond the ordinary on things of interest
- Self-initiated learner **OR** nothing is ever good enough and can't finish because it isn't correct
- Makes profound observations and asks provocative questions
- Excited about discoveries and is eager to tell others
- Boldness of ideas; original and unusual; has clever responses
- Shows initiative; eager to do new things **OR** shows little interest in what is to be learned
- Learns quickly through experience **OR** won't do assignments because s/he already "knows"
- Retains and uses ideas and information well **OR** plays around and tests well
- Resourcefulness; ability to solve problems by clever methods

### **Academic Characteristics**

- High mathematics ability; one to two years above grade level in mathematics
- Reads one to two years above grade level
- Enjoys reading and reads a lot
- High levels of verbal ability; strong language skills; advanced vocabulary
- Excellent memory **OR** good guesser
- Draws inferences

- Enjoys learning
- Needs one to two repetitions for mastery

**Creativity Characteristics**

- Likes to invent new things
- Imaginative story telling; language rich in imagery
- Shows interest and/or ability in fine arts (music, art, drama, dance)
- Imagination in thinking
- Originality and creativity in thinking
- Mature or keen sense of humor; may have difficulty relating to peers/sophistication of humor
- Shows relationships among apparently unrelated ideas; uses analogies **OR** difficulty staying focused due to random thoughts and ideas
- Resourcefulness; ability to solve problems by clever methods; unusual, unique, clever responses

**Social/Emotional Characteristics**

- Shows strong feelings and opinions
- Enjoys peers; prefers adults
- Is highly self-critical
- Displays leadership ability in peer group
- Early onset of idealism and a sense of social justice **OR** over interest in social issues can lead to depression
- Can conceptualize about many emotions he or she hasn't yet experienced
- Heightened sensitivity to expectations and feelings of others
- Awareness of his or her own differences
- Displays non-conforming behavior **OR** behaves in a way that is unique or different from peers
- May challenge ideas of others **OR** uninhibited in expression of opinions

**Identification Procedures (3)**

**Referrals:**

Referrals are permitted and accepted based on data or evidence from teachers, other staff, parents, students, and members of the community. People who refer students will use the district's referral form to refer a student to be considered for admission in the program. Referrals for currently enrolled students will occur during the referral window, which is end of November- beginning of January. Referrals for newly enrolled students who may miss the referral window because of their enrollment date will be accepted within three months of their enrollment date. All referred students will be screened during the school day at their building in the month of January.

**Military Compact:**

Under RCW 28A.185.030(2), when a child of a military family in transition moves to NKSD and has been assessed or enrolled as highly capable or equivalent by the child's previous school district, NKSD will initially honor the placement of the child into the highly capable program. NKSD will determine whether the sending school district's program is highly capable or equivalent to NKSD's Highly Capable program. After the student has been admitted, NKSD may conduct subsequent

assessments to determine appropriate placement and continued enrollment in the Highly Capable program.

**Identification:**

For Kindergarten and newly enrolled students: Relevant data will be gathered for all referrals and kindergarteners and newly enrolled students will be included in the identification process in November. Kindergarteners who qualify for services will start a Student Learning Plan during second semester. For grades 1-11: The district will assess referrals to identify students who qualify for further assessment or data collection. Assessment criteria will include at least two of the following: State assessments, district assessments, Math and Reading STAR assessments, or the CogAT Screener Version 7. If data from identification instruments is consistently below the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, further data will not be gathered.

All 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students will be given the CogAT test as a screener. This test will be given in January. Training opportunities will be available for teachers who have not administered the assessment before. Results will be provided for teachers and parents.

**Assessments:**

A referral begins the assessment process. Except for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders who have already taken the CogAT, the appropriate version of the CogAT will be given by a cadre of proctors from the district office. Testing occurs in a pull-out format during the school day. Students may also be asked to take the STAR assessments if they have not already done so. All available achievement data, parent/teacher ratings and any additional information provided will be gathered and considered.

**Selection:**

A multi-disciplinary selection team will review data that has been collected for each of the referred students. The multi-disciplinary selection team is composed of: A special teacher (provided that if a special teacher is not available, a classroom teacher shall be appointed); a psychologist or other qualified practitioner with the training to interpret cognitive and achievement test results; a certified coordinator or administrator with the responsibility for the supervision of the district's highly capable program; and additional professionals if any, that the district deems desirable.

The multi-disciplinary selection team will evaluate individual student assessment profile data using a blind (no name) process. The selection decision is based on:

1. A preponderance of evidence from the profile data demonstrating that a student is among the most highly capable.
2. Evidence of clear need for highly capable services; and
3. Determination of which students would benefit the most from inclusion in the district's program.

A single assessment score or indicator will not prevent a student's selection for the HCP; however, individual pieces of evidence, if strong enough, can indicate that the student would benefit from these services. If properly validated test are not available, the professional judgment of the qualified district personnel shall determine eligibility of the student based upon evidence of cognitive and/or academic achievement.

Data used for selection is aligned with the philosophy and structure of service delivery models. Student achievement and cognitive ability are critical aspects of the selection process. District services for highly capable students are designed to meet the needs of students by providing academic acceleration and challenge and increased cognitive rigor.

A general guideline for determining “most highly capable” in North Kitsap is a student who is consistently performing or showing potential for performing in the top 5 percentile nationally and/or among the peer group based on cognitive ability and/or academic achievement. For a self-contained program for highly capable students, the general guideline is the top 2 percentile.

These guidelines are subject to the professional judgment of the multi-disciplinary selection team, which will include qualitative data, such as teacher and parent rating scales and other pertinent data that may be provided. Appeal for identification decisions using these guideline is allowed using the Appeals Process.

### **Process for Appeal**

Parents/legal guardians have the right to appeal any decision of the Multi-Disciplinary Selection Team. Individuals appealing the selection committee's decision must submit a completed appeals form. The written request must include reasons for the appeal and, to support reconsideration, provide additional evidence of significantly advanced cognitive or academic levels and/or outstanding intellectual, academic, or creative abilities.

Parents/legal guardians must submit the appeal request and supporting evidence to the Highly Capable Program Coordinator within 30 calendar days of the Multi-Disciplinary Selection Team’s original decision notification. The 30-day window will begin the day the notification is sent to parents/legal guardians.

The district’s designee will review the student's file, assessment profile data, and additional evidence provided in the request for appeal.

The decision may include:

- Upholding the original decision of the Multi-Disciplinary Selection Team;
- Reversing the original decision of the Multi-Disciplinary Selection Team;

The Appeals Designee will decide within 10 school days after the receipt of written request for reconsideration and will notify the parent/legal guardian of the decision in writing. The decision of the Appeals Designee is the final decision.

### **Program Design and Delivery (4)**

#### **Elementary Schools: Two Service Delivery Models**

- 1) Students are served in their regular classrooms by their teacher and through collaboration with other school staff. Each school submits a “Building Highly Capable Plan” annually describing how their school answers Question 4 at each grade level in math and ELA. Teachers and parents draft a Student Learning Plan, which describes any individualized services or accommodations that are not part of the building plan.
- 2) Self-Contained classes for grades 3,4 and 5 are housed at Suquamish Elementary, with specially trained teachers.

**Secondary Schools:** Students in secondary schools participate in a wide variety of programs and courses which provide opportunities for acceleration and enrichment in many areas. Secondary school counselors check in with students who are identified as highly capable to make sure they are aware of the many choices they have.

Our middle schools have self-contained classes for English and Social Studies. Students may be placed in these classes in one of two ways:

- 1) Based on being identified as highly capable AND showing high achievement/aptitude in reading and writing.
- 2) If there is extra room, students who are not identified as highly capable can be placed in the ELA/SS classes through school level decision making processes. This placement does not mean that the student is identified as highly capable.

If a parent or teacher disagrees with the program/placement of a student, this falls outside of the Appeals Process used for identification. Concerns of this nature should be brought to school staff and if not resolved to the Highly Capable Program coordinator.

### **Differentiation in the General Education Classroom (5)**

Our Marzano Instructional Framework calls for teachers to scaffold, question and set high expectations for underserved students. Strategies and systems used to accomplish this, such as grouping students, providing cognitively complex tasks, and building on student interests and background are good strategies for highly capable students as well.

When specifically planning differentiation for highly capable students, teachers and PLCs can focus their efforts with these key considerations:

Ways to Modify Instruction: (summarized from Berger, S. 1991)

- 1) **Modify Content** – *“content consists of ideas, concepts, descriptive information, and facts. Content, as well as learning experiences, can be modified through acceleration, compacting, variety, reorganization, flexible pacing, and the use of more advanced or complex concepts, abstractions, and materials. When possible, students should be encouraged to move through content areas at their own pace. If they master a particular unit, they need to be provided with more advanced learning activities, not more of the same activity.”*
- 2) **Modify Process** – *“activities must be restructured to be more intellectually demanding. For example, students need to be challenged by questions that require a higher level of response or by open-ended questions that stimulate inquiry, active exploration, and discovery. Although instructional strategies depend on the age of the students and the nature of the disciplines involved, the goal is always to encourage students to think about subjects in more abstract and complex ways. Activity selection should be based on student interests, and activities should be used in ways that encourage self-directed learning. (See appendix, cognitive rigor matrix)*
- 3) **Modify Environment** - All students learn best in a receptive, nonjudgmental, student-centered environment that encourages inquiry and independence, includes a wide variety of materials, provides some physical movement, is generally complex, and connects the school experience with the greater world. Criteria 5 of the State/Marzano Framework is an excellent guide for teacher self-reflection in this area.
- 4) **Modify Product Expectation and Student Response** - *“Teachers can encourage students to demonstrate what they have learned in a wide variety of forms that reflect both knowledge and the ability to manipulate ideas. For example, instead of giving a written or oral book report, students might prefer to design a game around the theme and characters of a book. Products can be consistent with each student's preferred learning style. They should address real problems, concerns, and audiences; synthesize rather than summarize information; and include a self-evaluation process.”*

### **Highly Capable Building Plan (6)**

The Building plan is designed by school staff and submitted annually. The purpose is to articulate school systems in place to answer Question 4 for students.

At the elementary school level, plans may vary from grade level to grade level based on the strategies a particular team employs and the resources that are available. For elementary schools, plans should cover each grade in math and reading at a minimum.

Secondary Building Plans will detail specialized course offerings, and provide a description of counseling services, clubs and activities that are available.

Building Plan Options (not exhaustive)

Part-Time Grouping (content specific)	Advanced Placement	Independent study
Advanced Subject Placement	Pre AP	Advanced Grade Placement
Differentiated Instruction	Tutorial	Self-Contained Highly Capable Classroom
Flexible grouping in class	Project Based Learning	Mentorships
Pull-out programs	Lunchtime Clubs	Visual and Performing Arts Programs
Academic contests	Before/After school programs	Advanced Career and Technical Programs
Opportunities to perform at School Assemblies	Check-in with designated staff member	Walk to Read/Math
School Newspaper	Student Store	Running Start
ASB Leadership	Running Start	Community Service Opportunities

**Student Learning Plans (7)**

The Student Learning Plan (SLP) is drafted collaboratively by the elementary teacher and parent/student. It is recommended that this activity take place during fall conferences, after the teacher has had a chance to build classroom routines and get to know students. If the teacher and parent have difficulty agreeing on a program for the student, the building’s Teacher Assistance Team can be used.

Since there is a Building Plan, the SLP should take on less importance, and should describe smaller interventions, such as additional reading materials, differentiated homework, ability to request breaks, etc...

A copy of the SLP must be kept at the school site, provided to appropriate staff and passed along to the next year’s teacher. The original document is sent to the district office following

See appendix – Student Learning Plan forms and examples.

### **Counseling for Highly Capable Students at the Secondary Level (8)**

During the school year, counselors at the secondary schools will meet with students to review their course of study and engagement in school activities. Stated goals for students in the Highly Capable Program include increased involvement in school activities and sustaining achievement based on grade point average.

These check-in meetings will be documented on the Secondary Student Counseling Form

### **Program Evaluation (9)**

#### **Highly capable students will:**

GOAL 1) Be highly engaged and active in a wide range of education experiences as measured by student survey data.

DISTRICT EVALUATION: student survey will be developed and implemented. Baseline data will be gathered to set specific targets.

GOAL 2) Progress to being fully prepared for college and/or career based on proficiency exhibited on assessments of College and Career Readiness Standards including SBA and district assessments.

DISTRICT EVALUATION: As the Smarter Balanced Assessment is implemented during the 2014-2015 school year, baseline data will be gathered and specific targets will be set for the subgroup of students who are selected for services through the Highly Capable Program.

GOAL 3) Continue on a trajectory of high academic achievement as exhibited by:

K-8: Student Growth Percentiles from STAR assessments in Math and Reading

DISTRICT EVALUATION:

K-8: At least 65% of students will show better than typical growth (SGP) using multiple data points during the school year on STAR reading and math assessments.

9-12: AT least 65% of students will maintain or increase their Grade Point Average between first and second semesters.

### FAQs (10)

- 1) Q: How are highly capable students served in high school?  
A: They select from a variety of options for acceleration and enrichment, counselors check in to make sure that students are aware of options and teachers are alerted when highly capable students are in their class.
  
- 2) Q: How do students get into the Highly Capable Program?  
A: They are referred by parents, teachers, community members or themselves. Parent permission to be screened and receive services must be obtained. The multi-disciplinary team decides whether they are in the program or not.
  
- 3) Q: How many students are in the program?  
A: There is no set amount. Students who are the “most highly capable” and who would “benefit most” are selected using professional judgment. A general guideline is the top 5 percent for being in the program and the top 2 percent for a self-contained program.
  
- 4) Q: Why are there suddenly different requirements?  
A: New legislation and codes/laws.
  
- 5) Q: What happens when a parent or teacher doesn’t agree with a decision about identification?  
A: There is an appeals process, described in district procedure.
  
- 6) Q: What if there are too many/too few students in a self-contained classroom?  
A: The MDT selects students without regard for space in the program. The schools are responsible for assigning teachers and filling class lists with additional students if necessary.
  
- 7) Q: Who can provide support for me in working with a highly capable student?  
A: The district does not have a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) dedicated to Highly Capable. The first step would be the Professional Learning Communities level, then a building Mutli-Tierd System of Support (MTSS) meeting can occur at the school level, where a more detailed plan can be implemented, and data can be gathered. Principals should become involved at the MTSS level, or if problems persist. The director of teaching and learning is the administrator in charge at the district level.
  
- 8) Q: Why is there a special program for highly capable students?  
A: Characteristics of highly capable students make them susceptible to difficulties in school, such as disengagement, underachieving and even drop-out.