

Talented and Gifted Programming at West Branch Schools

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Iowa Code Chapter 59

The state of Iowa (Iowa Code Chapter 59) mandates that talented and gifted students be provided services in public schools in grades K-12. The following components are required of the program:

- Valid, systematic, and multiple criteria for identification
- Appropriately endorsed educators
- Program budget
- Clearly defined program goals and performance measures
- Differentiated curriculum for students identified for services
- Procedures for annual review and evaluation

[http://search.legis.state.ia.us/NXT/gateway.dll/ar/iac/2810_education%20department%20_5b281_5d/0590_chapter%2059%20gifted%20and%20talented%20programs/_c_2810_0590.xml?f=templates\\$fn=default.htm](http://search.legis.state.ia.us/NXT/gateway.dll/ar/iac/2810_education%20department%20_5b281_5d/0590_chapter%2059%20gifted%20and%20talented%20programs/_c_2810_0590.xml?f=templates$fn=default.htm)

Talented and Gifted Program Goals

Below are the TAG programming goals designed to meet the needs of identified students in our district:

- Providing services to students who possess outstanding abilities in one or more of the following areas: general intellectual ability, creative thinking, leadership ability, visual/performing arts, and/or ability in a specific aptitude (math, science, reading, etc.) Iowa Code 257.44.
- Using multiple criteria to identify students for program services that extend learning opportunities beyond their uniquely advanced skills and abilities.
- Meeting the needs of gifted and talented students in the public school system by working with classroom teachers to observe, assess, and provide differentiated curriculum while evaluating outcomes.
- Providing ongoing professional development based on best practices to communicate the social, emotional, and intellectual needs of talented and gifted students.

West Branch Community Schools TAG Mission

The mission of the West Branch Community School District's Talented and Gifted program is to provide educational opportunities that acknowledge the academic, creative, and social-emotional needs of gifted learners. We are dedicated to accommodating these students through differentiated and/or accelerated learning that provides higher-level thinking and the opportunity for personal growth. Through these actions, we will meet the district's mission of "preparing students to live and learn with passion and purpose."

Talented and Gifted

Recommendation/Identification Criteria

The purpose of identification for the TAG program is to provide students with exceptional talents and abilities the extended services and opportunities that meet their educational needs. Identification is an ongoing process. The processes for recommendation and identification are described for grades K-12 below.

Services Provided for Future Identification (Grades K-3)

In the TAG program during the K-3 years, observational services are employed to form a solid basis for future identification. The **observational services** include:

1. Informal observations (per request of classroom teacher)
2. Classroom achievements
3. Structured classroom observations during activities by TAG educator
4. Standardized assessment data (FAST, ISASP, CogAT)
5. Student-background review (meeting held by elementary principal, classroom teachers, and TAG educator)
6. Parent input via letter correspondence or conference

-Students in grades K-3 can enter the screening pool through district assessment (FAST K-3, ISASP 3rd grade, CogAT- 3rd grade), data, teacher recommendations, or parent communication. Student data will be reviewed annually which could potentially impact the total number of students in these grades.

Listed below are classroom activities provided to students in grades K-3:

- Activities provide students with lessons on critical thinking and serve as structured observations for the TAG educator providing opportunities for individual and small groups. Interactions with students will occur once a cycle while the rest of the class is doing independent work based on the large group activity presented at the beginning of the class.
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Criteria and Services for Formal Identification (Grades 4-12)

The Cognitive Abilities Assessment (CogAT) is administered to students during the spring semester of the third grade year to begin the process of formal identification. At the beginning of the fourth grade year, students are formally identified for the delivery of TAG services. Formal identification may occur in any grade thereafter as assessment data demonstrates.

For students in the WBCSD, in grades 4-12, the following **criteria** are used for identification:

1. Scores equal to or exceeding 120 (using SAS) on the Cognitive Abilities Test in the areas of verbal ability, quantitative, and nonverbal reasoning. The test is administered to all students at the 3rd-grade level. It may be administered again at the 6th-grade level to students who have not been previously identified but have received recommendations due to district assessments or classroom performance.
2. Scores equal to or exceeding the 90th percentile on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress areas of reading comprehension, and/or mathematics for at least two consecutive years.
3. Scores falling in the 90th percentile or higher on Spring FAST testing in math and/or reading for at least two consecutive years.
4. In addition, non-academic assessment may be used to identify students who do not meet the numerical indices listed above but demonstrate gifted behavior (such as the Torrence or other creativity test).
5. Identification material is reviewed by the identification team, including school administrators, TAG educator, classroom teacher, and parent(s).
6. Students shall not be precluded or excluded from TAG services based on behavior, work completion, organization, or study habits.
7. The progress of ELL students and students of minorities will be monitored as data is collected.

For students new to the WBCSD in grades 4-12, the following **criteria** are used for identification:

1. If scores on the Cognitive Abilities Test are available, a score equal to or exceeding 120 (using SAS) on the verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal reasoning areas will be used.
2. History of participation in an ELP/TAG program
3. Teacher recommendations
4. First quarter grades
5. Scores exceeding the 90th percentile on the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress areas of reading comprehension, and/or mathematics for at least two consecutive years.
6. In situations where critical pieces of data are not available or missing, a student may be included in the TAG program on a probationary status until enough data has been gathered and deemed sufficient by the identification team.

Listed below are **services** provided to identified students in grades 4-12.

- At the 4th grade level, students are pulled out of regular classroom activities 2-3 times a week. Project-based learning is a driving focus, providing students with the opportunity to learn through personal inquiry.
- At the 5th-8th grade levels, students are pulled out of regular classroom activities 1-2 times a week. Project-based learning is a driving focus, providing students with the opportunity to learn through personal inquiry.
- At the high school level, students meet in groups according to grade level, 1-2 times a month. They are also serviced through individual advising meetings (per student request) regarding college preparation and social-emotional needs.
- Acceleration is available to students in the forms of single-subject acceleration and whole-grade acceleration.
 - For single-subject acceleration, a team will work together to ensure the successful acceleration of a student in a single subject if deemed appropriate. The TAG educator, student's parents, principal, and classroom teachers will meet to discuss the administration of an acceleration readiness exam. The student must demonstrate at least an 80% (or the equivalent proficiency of expected skills) on the exam to be accelerated in that subject.
 - For whole-grade acceleration, the Iowa Acceleration Scale will be used to assess readiness for acceleration in combination with a team consisting of the TAG educator, student's parents, principal, and classroom teachers.
 - At the high school level, students may coordinate their own acceleration by enrolling in AP courses, PSEO courses, and other dual enrollment classes.

Staffing the TAG Program

The education of gifted and talented learners is the shared responsibility, reliant on collaboration and effective communication between the TAG educator, principals, regular classroom teachers, and guidance counselors. Currently, West Branch Community Schools has one full-time teacher assigned to work with TAG students K-12.

State law requires that TAG educators in Iowa possess a gifted and talented endorsement. The TAG educator currently employed in the district meets this requirement.

Professional Development

The TAG educator in the district is encouraged to attend the ITAG Conference each fall in Des Moines, Iowa. There, the professional has the opportunity to learn about new trends in gifted education. In addition, the TAG educator and other members of the certified instructional staff will participate in the professional development process through the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM). The district's TAG educator will be involved with ongoing delivery of staff development to define the program and needs of gifted learners.

TAG Program Budget

Each TAG program in the state of Iowa is funded as part of the school finance formula and as determined by the Iowa Code (257.46). As of 1999, each district has received an expenditure per pupil. Each district must also fund an additional one fourth or more from the district cost of the school district (257.46(1)). This money must be reserved for the sole use of gifted and talented students only. If portions of the funding remain at the end of a budget year, the funds are carried over to the following year.

TAG Program Evaluation

According to Iowa Chapter 59.5(6) the school district must give consideration to multiple evaluative components. The West Branch Talented and Gifted program will be evaluated:

- a. for the purpose of measuring program effects and providing information for program improvement.
- b. for each program level where objectives have been established.
- c. for both cognitive and affective student development.

At the semester's beginning, identified TAG students will complete goal setting exercises to indicate the growth they would like to establish in the TAG program for that semester. At the semester's closing, identified TAG students will complete self-reflection exercises, evaluating how well the TAG program has helped them meet their goals for

that semester. Also, the TAG educator will meet with principals from all three levels once a semester to analyze identified students' test data and/or yearly growth.