

Handout D

Review of a Sample of Nebraska Districts’ 2021 Plans for Evaluation of High Ability Learner Services

Overview

REL Central at Marzano Research reviewed one district’s 2021 High Ability Learner plan from each of 16 Education Service Units in Nebraska. We reviewed the plans to gather information on how districts evaluate their High Ability Learner services. Below we summarize the findings from all plans and provide the description from each district’s plan.

Summary of Evaluation Plans

Of the 16 district plans reviewed,

- 4 districts had no description of evaluation
- 4 districts included only general statements, such as, “An evaluation of the current plan is ongoing.”
- 8 districts provided some description but still at a high level with little detail

Of the 8 plans that provided a description of evaluation,

- 4 districts indicate that they will conduct surveys
- 3 districts describe that they will collect input but do not describe methods
- 2 districts mention standards or quality indicators that they will use in the evaluation
- 4 districts provide a list of areas that will be evaluated (see Table 1)

Table 1. Number of Districts Listing Each Evaluation Area

Evaluation Area	Number of Districts
Program design	4
Student needs	4
Curriculum	4
Student identification	4
Other resources	4
Learning environment	3
Personnel qualifications	2
Communication	2

Evaluation Area	Number of Districts
Staff development	3
Cost effectiveness	2

Descriptions from District Plans

The descriptions of the plans for evaluation are provided below by the categories of plans with a general statement about evaluation, and plans with a description of evaluation. For confidentiality, we have coded the districts as Districts A through R. The descriptions are copied verbatim from the plans with additional detail provided as needed. Districts F, K, P, and Q did not provide a description of their evaluation plans.

Plans with General Statements About Evaluation

District H – Includes a goal to “Continuously evaluate and improve the programming and services for students.”

District J – “An evaluation of the current plan is ongoing.”

District M – States that each school has a program design team that has listed as one of their purposes to “Plan the evaluation procedures for determining the success for program services.”

District R – “The program will be evaluated annually by the team to respond to student needs and identified areas of growth through reflective practice.”

Plans with a Description of Evaluation

District A – “We will evaluate our identification procedures and our services by using some of the materials provided by the Nebraska Department of Education in the document ‘Procedures for the Identification of High-Ability Learners.’ We will assess what is and what is not effective in the identification process and generate ideas to help us improve the process. We will evaluate our programs and services by documenting the achievement of high-ability learners and participation of high-ability learners in extended educational opportunities.”

District B – “The services provided by the Schoolwide Enrichment Program will be reviewed based on input from parents, educators, students, and community members in the areas set forth in Using the National Gifted Teacher Preparation Standards and NAGC Program Standards to Inform Practice: Snapshot Survey of Gifted Programming Effectiveness Factors (Attachment E). The process of evaluation will enable the school district to assess whether or not objectives of the program are being met and whether or not administrators, classroom teachers, parents, and students believe that the services being provided are meeting their collective and individual needs.”

District C – “The District will solicit input from parents, students, and teachers to determine the effectiveness of the enrichment opportunities and services provided to high ability learners. A yearly review will evaluate the high ability learner program using numerical and qualitative data

collected. The yearly review shall include program strengths and weaknesses in the following areas: program design, student needs, learning environment, curriculum, student identification, personnel qualifications, resources, communication, staff development, and cost effectiveness. The local plan shall be revised based on the results of the yearly review. The local plan and the yearly review shall be made available for review by any interested persons upon request.”

District D – Under the section labeled “Evaluation of identification procedures and program,” the plan includes a survey from the Region VII Equity Assistant Center. The survey includes these five questions rated on a scale of Always (5) to Almost Never (1):

- “The district notifies students and parent(s)/guardian(s) about the availability and nature of gifted services.
- The district examines its criteria for identification of gifted students and access to gifted services to ensure equal access to those classes.
- If standardized test instruments are used, they are validated as appropriate for the purposes for which the district is using them for the subject population.
- The district provides trained staff to administer, evaluate, and interpret the results of the test instrument used.
- The district examines student enrollments for its gifted services to determine whether those enrollments are proportionate racially, ethnically, in gender, among other-abled students, etc., on the overall student enrollment in the school or grade. The district determines whether the reasons for the disproportion or imbalance are based on valid and nondiscriminatory reasons.”

District I – “Evaluation of the HAL program will be an ongoing process using research-based information about programming and input from administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Programming decisions will be based on information received through the evaluative process and compliance to state goals and objectives according to Rule 3.”

District L – “Shall establish procedures for serving high ability learners. If implemented, these procedures will include both formative and summative evaluation. This will determine the effectiveness of the district-wide plan for services extended to the learners with high ability.

- The evaluation procedures may allow for input from parents, educators, students, and community members.
- Quality indicators and illustrative criteria for both curriculum-based and student-based components may be used in the evaluation of the district program goals and objectives.
- The yearly review may include program strengths and weaknesses in such areas as program design, students’ needs, learning environment, curriculum, student identification, personnel qualifications, resources, communication, staff development, and cost effectiveness.

The local plan should be revised according to the results of the yearly review. Curricular planning should be open to and reflective of advanced research and information regarding

learning and learners with high ability. The Evaluation Plan and Yearly Review shall be available for review by interested persons upon request.”

District N – “Annual evaluations of the GATE program shall be conducted by using any of the following measures: surveys, interviews, and program evaluations aligned to AQueSSTT. Information gathered will be used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the HAL program and how we can improve. Student needs, program design, curriculum, learning environment, student identification, staff development, and other resources will be evaluated.”

District O – “The district will utilize a formative approach to evaluation. The committee will meet periodically throughout the year to evaluate how HAL students are being challenged and if any changes are needed. These meetings will focus on program design, student needs, curriculum, student identification, and other resources. This may include but not be limited to surveys, communication with parents, students, research, workshops, etc.”

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