Handout E

Review of a Sample of Nebraska Districts' 2021 Plans for Systems to Identify High Ability Learners

Overview

REL Central at Marzano Research reviewed one district's 2021 High Ability Learner plan from each of 16 Education Service Units. We reviewed the plans to gather information on the districts' system for identifying High Ability Learners. Below we summarize the findings from all plans and provide the description from each district's plan.

Summary of Identification Systems

Of the 16 district plans reviewed,

- 5 districts have general descriptions of the identification systems that don't include detailed requirements
- 2 districts indicate that students must meet ongoing performance requirements to stay in the program
- 9 districts indicate that they use a system in which students must meet multiple criteria to be identified. Table 1 provides a description of the multiple criteria required and the number of districts with each type of criteria.

Table 1. Number of Districts with Each Type of Criteria

Criteria	Number of Districts
Student must have a specified score on multiple assessments.	3
Student must have a specified score on multiple assessments OR have a specified score on one assessment and have a nomination.	2
Student must have a specified score on one assessment and have multiple nominations.	1
Student must have a specified score on multiple assessments and have a nomination OR students must have multiple nominations and a specified score on one assessment.	1
Student must meet specified score on one assessment OR meet a different score on one assessment and have a nomination.	1
Student must meet a specified score on one assessment OR have a body of evidence from other indicators of performance, including products and nominations based on checklists.	1

Descriptions from District Plans

The descriptions of the identification systems from each district's plan are provided below by the categories of general description provided, requires students to meet multiple criteria, and requires ongoing performance for continuation. As appropriate, we provide summaries of the identification systems from the plans; if we were unable to summarize, we include the descriptions verbatim.

General Description Provided

District A – Provides a general description of using tests and involving teachers. "Presently, tools of identification include several parts of the norm-referenced achievement test. We use several of the total battery scores, not just the composite scores. The classroom teacher is also an important part of the identification procedure. We are planning to develop improved methods of identifying high-ability learners by including more teacher input."

District D – "The identification procedures that follow use multiple criteria approach in order to provide an inclusive rather than an exclusive approach to selecting students for the program. Students are identified and selected for the program by meeting (but not limited to) the following requirements 1) scoring above average on three out of four sections on the NWEA and state tests; 2) teacher recommendation based on classroom performance; 3) test scores (Summative test scores, including but not limited to aims web plus, and AR; 4) citizenship and responsibility inside and outside of the classroom. There are several forms to choose from depending on the circumstances necessary to make a complete, fair and inclusive judgment."

District K – Provides a general statement about using multiple criteria. "The procedure for identification of learners with high ability will be through multiple criteria including norm referenced testing, teacher recommended student nomination, peer nomination, parent nomination and ability in subject and creative areas."

District L – Lists the methods/tests used for multiple criteria but does not describe how they are used. The methods listed are MAP, norm-referenced writing assignment, teacher nomination, and student portfolio.

District Q – "Testing, identification, and targeted activities are provided at each building. Formal identification of students for the HAL Program takes place at the third grade level. It can occur any time thereafter, for students, as the district's identification criteria are met. Once a student is identified at the elementary level, he/she remains in the program through 8th grade."

Requires Students to Meet Multiple Criteria

District B – Students who meet a specified score on MAP or an aptitude test (e.g., CogAT, Slossan, K-Bit, TTCT) automatically qualify. If the specified score is not met, the student may be nominated by a teacher, parent, or self to be tested. Upon nomination, the student has to meet the same specified score on the aptitude test.

District F – Students must meet three of nine criteria. Seven of the criteria require the student to meet a specified score on an assessment (MAP, NSCAS, STAR, ACT). The remaining two criteria are a requirement for the student to meet a specified GPA and a recommendation by a teacher.

District H – Students who meet a specified score on the MAP assessment in third grade will take the CogAT. No information provided on how the CogAT scores are used.

District I – Students must meet two of four criteria: teacher nomination, specified score on an achievement test, specified score on a CRA, or specified score on a cognitive test.

District J – Students must have two teacher recommendations and meet a specified score on the MAP assessment.

District M – Students must meet two of four criteria:

- Specified score on a standardized achievement test
- Products or evidence of outstanding performance with supporting data submitted by staff, parents, peers, self, or community members
- Outstanding records of past performance (e.g., grades)
- Evidence of ability on the differentiated characteristics checklist
- Specified score on individual intelligence test

If a student meets the specified score on an intelligence test, they are automatically identified. If the student does not meet the specified score, then a body of evidence must be submitted and reviewed by a steering committee.

District N – Students must meet three of four criteria:

- Specified score on cognitive test
- Specified score on achievement test
- Specified grades OR qualifying recommendation from teacher, parent, or student
- Qualifying recommendation for creativity or leadership from teacher, parent, or student

District O – Students must meet two of three criteria: specified scores on composite or subject areas on NRT, specified score on cognitive screening test, and teacher nomination.

District R – Students must receive 10 points from a matrix that assigns points based on scores on the NCSAS, NWEA, and ACT assessments. The plan also indicates that a student can qualify by teacher nomination using the modified SRBCSS (Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students).

Requires Ongoing Performance for Continuation

District C – Students must meet a specified score on a subject area placement test of a college readiness test, or obtain a specified score on the MAP assessment, or receive a recommendation

by a teacher and approval by a teacher with supporting data. To remain in the program, students must "exhibit appropriate behavior in the classroom and maintain an appropriate level of academic performance."

District O – "Standardized Criteria = grades 3-12 score in the 85th Percentile or above on an achievement test (NWEA MAP test in Language, Reading, Math, Science); or Exceeds the Standard on the NSCAS/ACT English Language Arts, Math, or Science Assessments. Identification will be re-evaluated annually using spring assessment scores. Non-Standardized Criteria = grades 3-12 Nomination from teacher(s). Supplemental information should be presented. This would include but not limited to a portfolio, competition results, recommendations from others, specialist recommendation, etc. Identification will be reevaluated annually using spring performance, except 5th-6th grade will use fall performance of current year…Once an elementary student is identified, he/she must attend 75% of sessions in his/her identified area(s) and complete projects that meet the standards to remain in HAL activities. Secondary students must complete an approved project in an identified area that meets the standards to remain in HAL activities. If a secondary student is identified in four or more areas, he/she must complete an approved project in two of those areas."

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