

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Gifted and Talented Programs, Funding and Uses

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is based on Iowa Code sections 257.42 through 257.49, 279.89, and 279.90, as well as Iowa Administrative Code rules 281—59 and 281—98.20. It provides guidance on Iowa's requirements for gifted and talented programming, including student identification, program services, funding, personnel, acceleration and implementation of the Advanced Mathematics Pathway and Automatic Enrollment requirements. The FAQ is intended to assist school districts in understanding applicable statutory and administrative requirements, support consistent statewide implementation and address common questions related to gifted and talented programming. School districts should use this guidance in conjunction with applicable state and federal laws, administrative rules, local board policies and district procedures.

Gifted and Talented Programs

1. Does the Iowa Code define gifted and talented children?

Yes. Iowa Code defines gifted and talented children as students who are identified as possessing outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance, and require instructional services and educational opportunities beyond those provided through the regular school program. Gifted and talented students demonstrate achievement, potential ability, or both, in one or more of the following areas:

- General intellectual ability;
- Creative thinking;
- Leadership ability;
- Visual and performing arts ability; or
- Specific ability aptitude.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.44.

2. Which schools are required to offer gifted and talented programming?

Every public school district must provide a gifted and talented program. A school district may meet this requirement independently or in partnership with one or more other school districts. Accredited nonpublic schools are not required to provide gifted and talented programming under Iowa Code.

3. What information must be included in a school district's Gifted and Talented Program Plan submitted through the Consolidated Accountability and Support Application?

School districts are required to submit a Gifted and Talented Program Plan through Consolidated Accountability and Support Application (CASA). The plan must include:

- Program goals, objectives, and activities designed to meet the needs of identified gifted and talented students;
- Student identification criteria and procedures;
- Professional learning plans for staff;
- Staff utilization plans;

- Program evaluation criteria, procedures, and performance measures;
- Program budget;
- Qualifications required of personnel administering the program; and
- Any additional information required by the Iowa Department of Education.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.43.

4. Must school districts report the number of students identified for gifted and talented programming?

Yes. School districts are required to identify gifted and talented students, provide appropriate services in all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 12, and report those students to the Iowa Department of Education.

As part of CASA, school districts must report the number of students in each grade level who receive gifted and talented services for a significant portion of the school year for both the current and previous school years. If no students receive services in a particular grade level, the district must provide a detailed explanation.

School districts must also report gifted and talented identification data three times each year through Student Reporting in Iowa (SRI). Districts should make every reasonable effort to ensure that the student counts reported through CASA align with the identification data reported through SRI.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.43.

5. How should a school district report gifted and talented student counts if the identification process is incomplete when reports are due or if the number of students receiving services changes during the school year?

If a school district has not completed its gifted and talented identification process when the Gifted and Talented Program Plan or Fall SRI data are due, the district should report the number of students currently receiving gifted and talented services.

Reported services should extend beyond those provided through the regular school program and should represent more than short-term flexible enrichment groups. The student counts reported at the end of the school year should reflect the district's finalized number of identified gifted and talented students receiving services.

If no students are receiving gifted and talented services in a particular grade level, the district must include a detailed explanation in its Gifted and Talented Program Plan.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42; Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—59.

Gifted and Talented Identification

6. What are the requirements for identifying students for gifted and talented programming?

School districts must establish and implement gifted and talented identification procedures for all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 12. Identification must be based on a body of evidence from multiple data sources and ensure that no single measure excludes a student from participating in the gifted and talented program.

Identification procedures must include both objective and subjective measures and, at a minimum, incorporate local comparisons within the school district and/or attendance center. Procedures must also be designed to identify students from all student populations, including students with disabilities and English learners.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42.

7. Are dual-enrolled homeschool students eligible to be identified as gifted and talented?

Yes. Under Iowa Code section 299A.8, students receiving Competent Private Instruction (CPI) who are dual enrolled are permitted to participate in academic and extracurricular activities offered by their resident public school district on the same basis as regularly enrolled students. This includes participation in the district's gifted and talented program when the student is identified as gifted and talented under the district's established identification procedures.

Dual-enrolled students who are identified as gifted and talented may also be eligible for concurrent enrollment opportunities. In addition, students in grades 9 and 10 who are identified as gifted and talented by their local school district may participate in concurrent enrollment in accordance with applicable state requirements.

8. What are examples of objective measures that may be used to identify gifted and talented students?

School districts determine which objective measures are used as part of their identification process. Examples of objective measures include, but are not limited to:

- Standardized assessments;
- Universal screening assessments;
- Benchmark assessments;
- Achievement assessments;
- Cognitive ability assessments; and
- Aptitude assessments.

School districts should select objective measures that align with their local gifted and talented identification procedures.

9. What are examples of subjective measures that may be used to identify gifted and talented students?

School districts determine which subjective measures are used as part of their identification process. Examples of subjective measures include, but are not limited to:

- Teacher, parent, or student nominations;
- Classroom observations;
- Behavior rating scales or checklists;
- Student interviews; and
- Portfolios of student work.

Subjective measures should be considered alongside objective measures as part of a comprehensive body of evidence.

10. Why must gifted and talented identification procedures include local comparisons?

Local comparisons help ensure that students are evaluated in relation to their peers within the same school or school district. Comparing students to others with similar educational opportunities creates a more representative process for identifying gifted and talented students and helps ensure that students from all populations are considered for services.

While not every measure used for identification must include a local comparison, school districts should include at least one local comparison as part of their identification process. The specific measures used remain a local decision.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42.

11. May gifted and talented identification measures vary by grade level?

Yes. Because assessment data and other evidence vary by grade level, school districts may use different identification measures for different grades. For example, the Iowa statewide assessment is not administered until grade 3 and therefore is not available as an identification measure in earlier grades.

While the specific measures may differ by grade level, the overall identification process should be systematic, consistent, and applied uniformly within each grade level. School districts should make every reasonable effort to review students in all grade levels for gifted and talented identification. The specific measures used remain a local decision.

12. What is universal screening?

Universal screening is the process of administering the same assessment to all students within a class, grade level, school, or school district to identify students who may benefit from additional instructional support, intervention, enrichment, or more advanced learning opportunities. Universal screening helps educators make informed decisions about the level of instruction and support needed to meet each student's educational needs.

13. Why is universal screening encouraged as part of gifted and talented identification?

Universal screening helps ensure that all students have equitable access to the gifted and talented identification process. By assessing all students using consistent measures, school districts are more likely to identify students from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences who may benefit from gifted and talented services.

14. May a school district "informally" identify students in the early grades and "formally" identify students only after the State Assessment results become available?

No. Iowa Code requires school districts to establish systematic and uniform identification procedures that include all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 12. If a school district provides gifted and talented services beyond those available through the regular school program, students receiving those services should be formally identified through the district's gifted and talented identification process.

School districts are also required to report the number of identified gifted and talented students in each grade level through both CASA and SRI. Identification procedures must be based on a body of

evidence that includes multiple objective and subjective measures, local comparisons, and ensures that no single criterion excludes a student from participation.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42.

15. Must gifted and talented students be identified for services every year?

No. School districts must maintain procedures for identifying gifted and talented students in all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 12. Whether a student retains gifted and talented identification from year to year is a local decision.

School districts are required to review the services provided to identified gifted and talented students at least annually to ensure those services continue to meet each student's educational needs.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42.

16. Must school districts identify gifted and talented students in every area included in Iowa Code's definition of gifted and talented?

No. School districts determine the areas in which students are identified for gifted and talented services. However, the services provided should align with each student's identified strengths and the area(s) for which the student has been identified.

Authority: Iowa Code §§ 257.42 and 257.44.

17. Are additional assessments required for gifted and talented identification?

No. Iowa Code does not require school districts to administer additional assessments solely for gifted and talented identification. School districts determine the measures used as part of their local identification procedures. Identification must be based on a comprehensive body of evidence from multiple data sources and ensure that no single measure excludes a student from participation in the gifted and talented program.

Gifted and Talented Services

18. What services must be provided to identified gifted and talented students?

School districts are required to provide gifted and talented services to all identified students in all grade levels, kindergarten through grade 12. Identified gifted and talented students must be provided with appropriate instructional adaptations and educational services commensurate with their abilities beyond those provided by the regular school program.

Gifted and talented services must align with the gifted and talented student's identification data, correspond to the academic strengths and interests of the identified student and address both the cognitive needs and character development of the identified student. Reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that the services provided by the gifted and talented program promote academic growth.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42.

19. What does it mean for gifted and talented services to align with a student's identification data?

Gifted and talented services should correspond to the student's identified strengths, abilities and educational needs. The services provided should be appropriate for the area or areas in which the

student has been identified and should extend beyond the instruction available through the regular school program.

For example, if a student is identified for gifted and talented services based on specific aptitude in reading, the services provided should include advanced learning opportunities in reading that are commensurate with the student's demonstrated abilities and needs.

Authority: Iowa Code §§ 257.42 and 257.44.

20. What does it mean to make "all reasonable efforts" to provide gifted and talented services that promote academic growth?

School districts should thoughtfully design gifted and talented services to ensure identified students receive instruction and educational opportunities that extend beyond the regular school program. Services should promote continued academic growth by developing advanced knowledge and skills, introducing more rigorous concepts and content and providing opportunities for greater depth, complexity, creativity and inquiry than would typically be available in the general education classroom.

School districts should regularly review the services provided to ensure they continue to meet the identified student's educational needs and support ongoing academic growth.

Authority: Iowa Code §§ 257.42 and 257.44; Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—59.

21. What are a gifted and talented student's cognitive needs?

Cognitive needs refer to the intellectual and academic needs of gifted and talented students. These needs may include opportunities to engage in advanced learning, critical and creative thinking, problem-solving, inquiry, exploration and the development of deep conceptual understanding. Gifted and talented services should provide instructional experiences that challenge students appropriately and support continued academic growth beyond the regular school program.

Authority: Iowa Code §§ 257.42 and 257.44.

22. What is meant by character development for gifted and talented students?

Character development refers to the intentional support of the personal development of gifted and talented students. School districts should provide opportunities that help identified students develop the skills and dispositions necessary for long-term academic success, personal well-being, and positive interpersonal relationships.

- Examples of character development supports may include, but are not limited to:
- Addressing perfectionism, stress or anxiety associated with advanced learning;
- Providing mentorship opportunities aligned to a student's strengths or interests;
- Facilitating collaboration with intellectual or like-ability peers;
- Assisting with academic and career planning, including course selection; and
- Developing self-advocacy, resilience, goal setting and leadership skills.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42.

23. Must each identified gifted and talented student have an individualized gifted and talented plan?

No. Iowa law does not require school districts to develop an individualized written gifted and talented plan for each identified student. However, it is considered a best practice to document the services, instructional adaptations, and educational opportunities provided to each identified student to ensure they are commensurate with the student's demonstrated abilities and educational needs.

24. May a school district provide whole-class enrichment as its gifted and talented service?

No. Whole-class enrichment, while beneficial for all students, does not satisfy the requirements of a gifted and talented program. Gifted and talented services must be designed to meet the unique educational needs of identified students and provide instruction and learning opportunities beyond those available through the regular school program.

Gifted and talented services should include instructional adaptations, advanced content, increased depth and complexity, accelerated learning opportunities or other educational experiences that are aligned with each identified student's strengths and needs.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—59 and 281—98.20.

25. May a school district use Advanced Placement or accelerated courses as the only gifted and talented service provided to identified students?

No. While AP and accelerated courses may be appropriate components of a gifted and talented student's educational program, they do not, by themselves, constitute a gifted and talented program. Because these opportunities are generally available to all students who meet local eligibility requirements, they do not satisfy the requirement to provide services that address the unique educational needs of identified gifted and talented students beyond the regular school program.

School districts should ensure that identified gifted and talented students receive services that address both their cognitive and character development needs in addition to participation in AP or accelerated coursework.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—59 and 281—98.20.

26. Must a school district's gifted and talented teacher have direct interaction with identified gifted and talented students?

Yes. Consulting with classroom teachers, supporting instructional planning and providing professional learning are all important responsibilities of a gifted and talented teacher or coordinator. However, these activities alone do not constitute gifted and talented services.

Gifted and talented teachers should also have direct interaction with identified students to ensure that services are appropriately aligned to each student's cognitive and character development needs. The frequency and nature of those interactions may vary based on the student's grade level, identified strengths and the district's service delivery model.

Authority: Iowa Code § 257.42; Iowa Administrative Code rules 281—59 and 281—98.20.

Acceleration

27. Which schools are required to adopt acceleration policies?

Beginning July 1, 2027, every public school district and charter school in Iowa must establish and implement policies and procedures for both subject acceleration and whole-grade acceleration.

Authority: Iowa Code § 279.90.

28. What must a school district's acceleration policy include?

A school district's acceleration policy must:

- Assess a student's readiness for subject acceleration and whole-grade acceleration;
- Ensure the accelerated placement provides an appropriate level of rigor, complexity and pace to meet the student's academic needs; and
- Provide supports to address any learning gaps that may result from acceleration.

Authority: Iowa Code § 279.90.

29. How should a school district identify and address learning gaps following acceleration?

School districts should evaluate whether an accelerated student possesses the prerequisite knowledge and skills necessary for success in the accelerated course or grade placement. Any identified learning gaps should be addressed through appropriate instructional support as new content is introduced.

- Examples of practices that may be used to identify and monitor learning gaps include:
- Pre-assessments or diagnostic assessments;
- Classroom observations;
- Student work and performance data;
- Progress monitoring; and
- Collaboration between the student's previous and current teachers.
- School districts should use this information to provide timely support that promotes the student's continued academic success following acceleration.

Gifted and Talented Personnel Costs

30. May a school district use gifted and talented funding to pay a portion of an administrator's or clerical employee's salary?

No. Gifted and talented funding is intended to support instructional services provided directly to identified gifted and talented students. Salaries for administrators, clerical staff and other indirect costs may not be paid from gifted and talented categorical funding unless the individual is exclusively assigned, for a specified period of time, to provide instructional services for the gifted and talented program.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

31. May gifted and talented funding be used to pay the salary of a curriculum director?

No. A curriculum director is not an allowable expenditure of gifted and talented categorical funding. However, school districts with comprehensive gifted and talented programs serving multiple buildings

may designate a gifted and talented program director to oversee the district's gifted and talented program. This position is distinct from a gifted and talented teacher or coordinator.

32. Who may serve as the gifted and talented teacher or coordinator?

The gifted and talented teacher or coordinator is responsible for supporting the implementation of the district's gifted and talented program, including student identification, program planning, service delivery and coordination with school staff.

The individual serving in this role must hold the appropriate talented and gifted endorsement and have sufficient time allocated to fulfill program coordination responsibilities. In many school districts, the gifted and talented coordinator also serves as a gifted and talented teacher.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—59.

33. What are the requirements for instructional staff whose salaries are paid with gifted and talented funding?

Instructional staff paid with gifted and talented categorical funding must hold the appropriate talented and gifted endorsement and provide services that meet the educational needs of identified gifted and talented students beyond the regular school program.

If an endorsed teacher serves both as a gifted and talented teacher and as a general education teacher, only the portion of the salary attributable to gifted and talented responsibilities may be paid from gifted and talented categorical funding.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—59 and 281—98.20.

34. May gifted and talented teachers co-teach using gifted and talented categorical funding?

Gifted and talented teachers may co-teach only if they hold the appropriate content-area and grade-level endorsement required for the course.

When serving as a co-teacher in a general education classroom, the teacher is providing instruction as part of the regular school program. Therefore, the portion of the teacher's salary associated with general education co-teaching may not be paid from gifted and talented categorical funding.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

35. May teachers of Advanced Placement or honors courses be paid from gifted and talented funding?

No. Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses are part of the school district's regular educational program and are generally available to students who meet local eligibility requirements. Salaries for teachers providing these courses may not be paid from gifted and talented categorical funding.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

36. May teachers of courses created through the Advanced Mathematics Pathway or Automatic Enrollment requirements be paid from gifted and talented funding?

No. Courses or programs offered as part of the Advanced Mathematics Pathway or Automatic Enrollment requirements under Iowa Code sections 279.89 and 279.90 are considered part of the school district's regular educational program. Accordingly, salaries for teachers providing those courses or programs may not be paid from gifted and talented categorical funding.

37. May gifted and talented funding be used to purchase AEA consultant services?

Yes. School districts may use gifted and talented categorical funding to purchase AEA consultant services when those services are directly related to providing or improving gifted and talented programming and otherwise meet the allowable uses of gifted and talented categorical funding.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

Gifted and Talented Use of Categorical Funds

38. May gifted and talented funding be used to support Advanced Placement programs?

No. Because AP courses are part of the school district's regular educational program and are generally available to all eligible students, they are not allowable expenditures of gifted and talented categorical funding.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

39. May gifted and talented funding be used to support International Baccalaureate programs?

No. International Baccalaureate (IB) programs are part of the school district's regular educational program and are not exclusive to identified gifted and talented students. Therefore, gifted and talented categorical funding may not be used to support these programs.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

40. May gifted and talented funding be used to pay Postsecondary Enrollment Options tuition?

Gifted and talented categorical funding may be used to pay Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) tuition for identified gifted and talented students in grades 9 and 10 because participation is limited to identified students.

Gifted and talented categorical funding may not be used to pay PSEO tuition for students in grades 11 and 12 because participation is available to all eligible students and is considered part of the regular school program.

41. May gifted and talented funding be used to support advanced coursework or programming created through the Advanced Mathematics Pathway or Automatic Enrollment requirements?

No. Advanced coursework or programming established under Iowa Code sections 279.89 and 279.90 is considered part of the school district's regular educational program. These offerings may not be funded through gifted and talented categorical funding.

42. May gifted and talented funding be used to pay for assessments used in gifted and talented identification?

It depends on how the assessment is used.

Gifted and talented categorical funding may be used for assessments administered to confirm the eligibility of individual students or small groups of students who are being considered for gifted and talented identification or to reevaluate previously identified students.

Gifted and talented categorical funding may not be used to pay for universal screening assessments administered to all students. Because universal screening is part of the district's general educational program, those costs should be paid from the district's general fund.

43. May gifted and talented funding be used to support programs such as Odyssey of the Mind, Mock Trial, concurrent enrollment, or similar activities?

No. Competitive events and activities are generally available to students beyond the gifted and talented program and therefore are not allowable expenditures of gifted and talented categorical funding. While school districts may choose to offer these opportunities as part of their educational or activities program, participation costs should not be paid from gifted and talented categorical funding.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

44. May gifted and talented funding be used to provide professional learning for general education teachers?

Yes. Gifted and talented categorical funding may support professional learning for general education teachers when the training directly supports the provision of services to identified gifted and talented students.

Authority: Iowa Administrative Code rule 281—98.20.

45. Under what circumstances may gifted and talented funding be used to support summer programming?

Gifted and talented categorical funding may be used to support summer programming when the activities are designed specifically for identified gifted and talented students and are intended to supplement, rather than replace, the school district's regular gifted and talented program.

If a summer program is open to all students, gifted and talented categorical funding may not be used to support that program.