



## **High Ability Handbook**

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## **Program Design**

### **Philosophy**

Argos Community School Corporation recognizes that some students perform at, or have the potential to perform at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in core academic areas. These students are found in all racial, ethnic, and socio economic groupings of students, and we recognize the need to identify these students using a systematic and ongoing approach. High ability learners require differentiated, accelerated, and inspiring learning experiences. Argos Community Schools' high ability program provides the rigor, responsiveness, and support required to maximize academic potential and emotional development of our students leading to the pursuit of excellence.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Argos Community Schools is to provide educational choices which will engage, challenge and support high ability learners to reach their full intellectual, social-emotional, and creative potential.

### **Program Goals**

The goals and objectives of Argos Community School Corporation's high ability plan are as follows:

- Implement an unbiased identification process using multi-faceted quantitative and qualitative measures.
- Create a variety of program options designed to help HA students achieve maximum growth.
- Provide professional development for educators to allow them to meet the unique needs of the HA learner.
- Evaluate, reflect, revise the HA program annually to provide the most effective programming for the ACS HA student.

### **Definition of High Ability**

A high ability student is one who performs at or shows the potential for performing at an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared with other students of the same age, experience, or environment. The high ability student is also characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests. (IC 20-36-1)

### **Counseling and Guidance**

Teachers and counselors are educated on the characteristics of high ability students. Middle and high school counselors help students in making class selections and assist with any other academic issues. Elementary students are supported by their classroom teacher as well as a school counselor as needed. ACS is committed to providing a systematic and differentiated program of effective services for these students; this proactive approach will facilitate development of their high potential and promote their positive adjustment.

## Elementary Overview

The High Ability Program for students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade consists of in-class differentiation, cluster grouping and/or pull-out Services.

- The In-Class Differentiation Model is a model in which curriculum and instruction are modified according to content, pacing, and/or product to meet unique student needs in the classroom.
- The Cluster Grouping Model is a grouping assignment for high ability identified students in the regular heterogeneous classroom. Typically, identified gifted students with similar needs, abilities, or interests are “clustered” in the same classroom, which allows the teacher to more efficiently differentiate assignments for a group of advanced learners rather than just one or two students.
- The Pull-Out Model consists of a high ability teacher or aide who works with groups of students to differentiate and move beyond typical grade level standards. Curriculum is specialized and may be accelerated.

### Identification and Placement

At the elementary level (K-5), students are identified for high ability or having the potential to be high ability in math, language arts, or general intellectual (both math and language arts). A combination of the following criteria may be used to identify our high ability students:

- Potential-based (aptitude) Measure:
  - Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) K, 2, and 5.
  - NNAT 1st grade.
- Performance-based (achievement) Measure:
  - NWEA (growth and performance measured throughout the year)
- Other Measures:
  - Teacher nomination/observation
  - Student portfolio work
  - SIGS rating scales

New students will be considered at the time of enrollment pending information from their previous school, teacher observations, and data collected. Students must meet local criteria for program placement. Identification for program services at a prior school does not automatically qualify the student for services at Argos Community School Corporation.

For both CogAT and NNAT, percentile ranks provide a comparison of your child’s performance to that of a national sample of students in the same grade, ranking students on a scale of 1 to 99. Scores in the 25th to 75th percentile range are considered to be average; scores in the 76th to 96th are considered to be higher than average. Those students who rank at or above the 95th percentile in verbal, quantitative, or nonverbal batteries meet identification criteria for high ability inclusion.

Further analysis, including NWEA and SIGS, is completed when a student meets the criteria below:

- Students rank between the 85th - 94th percentile
- Students are ranked in the top 5%-10% of his/her class per school

Scores from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) factor into high ability identification. All students take NWEA three times a year (beginning, middle and end). Students meeting the benchmark of 95% or higher on NWEA on the *end of the year* assessment may be identified as high ability or the having potential to be high ability. Scores from the end of the year NWEA assessment will be revisited for all students for appropriate placement each year. NWEA scores may be used for further analysis for those students who have met criteria for the screening pool.

Finally, teachers may complete SIGS Teacher Rating Scale for students meeting the criteria in the screening pool. The selection committee will meet in the spring to begin analyzing the data for identifying students for the following school year.

### **Elementary Parent Notification**

Every effort will be made to let elementary families know whether their child met the criteria for high ability as soon as possible. This notification will also serve to notify parents/guardian that the identified child shall participate in HA services during the designated grade level.

Should a parent/guardian prefer that their child not receive HA services, then written notification must be provided to your child's teacher and/or principal. The letter will be forwarded to the HA department.

### **Elementary (K-5th Grade) Exit Procedure**

A child may be removed from the program at any time by a parent by providing the building principal with a written request. If the teacher or the high ability teacher/instructor has a concern about a child's placement in high ability, additional data will be collected.

Should a parent/guardian, the high ability teacher/instructor or classroom teacher request discontinuance of program services due to poor performance or for any other reasons, the following protocol will be followed:

1. A conference will be held with the student and his/her parent or guardian addressing concerns.
2. A trial period of no less than one grading period will follow allowing time for the student to modify his/her performance.
3. A second conference will be held to evaluate the student's further participation in the program.
4. Provided the family still wishes to discontinue their child's participation in the program, a written letter from the student's parent or guardian stating reasons for discontinuance must be submitted to the classroom teacher who will then forward the letter to the building principal and High Ability Coordinator.
5. If the request for discontinuance in the program was made by the HA instructor or classroom teacher, and the student does not make reasonable progress during the trial period, a committee (including the building principal and/or HA Coordinator, classroom teacher, HA teacher/instructor and the child's parent/guardian) will meet to evaluate the student's lack of progress and make a recommendation to continue or discontinue High Ability program services.

## Middle School Overview

Argos offers the following courses within the High Ability Program (by subject area):

- Mathematics Department
  - Pre-Algebra (8th Grade)
- Science Department
  - ICP (offered in 8th grade for high school credit)
  - Biology I (offered in 8th grade for high school credit)

### Argos Junior High School (6th, 7th, and 8th Grade) Identification and Placement

At the middle school level (6-8), students are determined eligible for High Ability Program placement based on the following criteria:

- Potential-based (aptitude) Measure:
  - CogAT (taken in 5th grade for middle school)
  - NNAT (taken in 8th grade)
- Performance-based (achievement) Measure:
  - NWEA (growth and performance measured throughout the year)
- Other Measures:
  - Teacher nomination/observation
  - Student portfolio work
  - SIGS rating scales

New students will be considered at the time of enrollment pending information from their previous school, teacher observations, and data collected. Identification for program services at a prior school does not automatically qualify the student for services at Argos Community School Corporation.

For CogAT and NNAT, percentile ranks provide a comparison of your child's performance to that of a national sample of students in the same grade, ranking students on a scale of 1 to 99. Scores in the 25th to 75th percentile range are considered to be average; scores in the 76th to 96th are considered to be higher than average. Those students who rank at or above the 95th percentile in verbal, quantitative, or nonverbal batteries meet identification criteria for high ability inclusion.

Further analysis, including NWEA and SIGS, is completed when a student meets the criteria below:

- Students rank between the 85th - 94th percentile
- Students are ranked in the top 5%-10% of his/her class per school.

Scores from the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) factor into high ability identification. All students take NWEA three times a year (beginning, middle and end). Students meeting the benchmark of 95% or higher on NWEA on the *end of the year* assessment may be identified as high ability or the having potential to be high ability. Scores from the end of the year NWEA assessment will be revisited for all students for appropriate placement each year. NWEA scores may be used for further analysis for those students who have met criteria for the screening pool.

Finally, teachers may complete SIGS Teacher Rating Scale for students meeting the criteria in

the screening pool. The selection committee will meet in the spring to begin analyzing the data for identifying students for the following school year.

### **Middle School Parent Notification**

Every effort will be made to let elementary families know whether their child met the criteria for high ability as soon as possible. This notification will also serve to notify parents/guardian that the identified child shall participate in HA services during the designated grade level.

Should a parent/guardian prefer that their child not receive HA services, then written notification must be provided to your child's teacher and/or principal. The letter will be forwarded to the HA department.

### **Middle School (6th - 8th Grade) Exit Procedure**

A child may be removed from the program at any time by a parent by providing the building principal with a written request. If the teacher or the high ability teacher/instructor has a concern about a child's placement in high ability, additional data will be collected.

Should a parent/guardian, the high ability teacher/instructor or classroom teacher request discontinuance of program services due to poor performance or for any other reasons, the following protocol will be followed:

1. A conference will be held with the student and his/her parent or guardian addressing concerns.
2. A trial period of no less than one grading period will follow allowing time for the student to modify his/her performance.
3. A second conference will be held to evaluate the student's further participation in the program.
4. Provided the family still wishes to discontinue their child's participation in the program, a written letter from the student's parent or guardian stating reasons for discontinuance must be submitted to the classroom teacher who will then forward the letter to the building principal and High Ability Coordinator.
5. If the request for discontinuance in the program was made by the HA instructor or classroom teacher, and the student does not make reasonable progress during the trial period, a committee (including the building principal and/or HA Coordinator, classroom teacher, HA teacher/instructor and the child's parent/guardian) will meet to evaluate the student's lack of progress and make a recommendation to continue or discontinue High Ability program services.

## High School Overview

Argos offers a number of courses at the high school level that align with the needs of High Ability learners. By grade nine, students may self-select courses that best meet individual academic objectives, strengths, and interests as long as the required prerequisites have been completed for a course. Since many students are college-bound, school counselors in the middle school and high school work with students and parents to develop a four-year educational plan based on academic strengths and career interests.

High ability students in grades nine through twelve have several opportunities for academic challenge, including:

1. The Academic Honors Diploma (47 credits)
2. Advanced Placement courses (a program of the College Board)
3. Dual Credit Enrollment

Each of these opportunities is explained in greater detail in the Argos High School Course Selection Guide.

### **Academic Honors Diploma**

The purpose of the Academic Honors Diploma is to encourage and reward students who pursue a rigorous, advanced course of study during the high school years. It is not intended that the Academic Honors diploma be limited to only a few academically talented students, but that a broad range of students is encouraged to actively pursue this diploma.

- Complete all requirements for Core 40
- Earn 2 additional Core 40 math credits
- Earn 6-8 Core 40 world language credits
- Earn 2 Core 40 fine arts credits
- Earn a grade of “C” or above in courses that will count toward the diploma
- Have a grade point average of “B” or above
- Complete **one** of the following:
  - Two Advanced Placement courses and corresponding AP Exams
  - Academic, transferable dual high school/college courses resulting in six college credits
  - One Advanced Placement course and corresponding AP exam and academic transferable dual high school/college course(s) resulting in 3 college credits
  - Score 1200 or higher combined SAT Math and Critical Reading\*
  - Score a 26 composite ACT
  - Earns an International Baccalaureate Diploma



## **Advanced Placement Courses**

Through The College Board, **any** student may earn Advanced Placement credit by taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams. Argos High School offers AP English Literature/Composition, AP English Language and Composition, AP Calculus, AP Precalculus, AP Statistics, AP US History, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, and AP Environmental Science.

AP exams are graded on a 1-5 basis, with a 5 being the highest score possible. Colleges and universities vary in the scores they accept for credit. Students are advised to check with each higher education institution(s), to which they desire to apply, to investigate each university's policy on accepting AP exam scores and issuing college credit.

Students who are interested in AP courses should contact the Argos High School guidance office. Additional information may also be accessed from The College Board at **[www.collegeboard.org/ap/students/](http://www.collegeboard.org/ap/students/)**.

## **Dual Credit Enrollment**

AHS has established collaborative partnerships with two area higher education institutions for the offering of dual credit in various courses. Students should check with their guidance counselors for information on which courses are available. More details about dual credit enrollment can be found in the Argos High School Course Selection Guide.

### **High School Parent Notification**

After the eighth grade year, students work with their parents, teachers and guidance counselors to create their schedules. Parents sign their registration forms which list their courses. Parents are notified of their student's final placement when they receive their class schedules in August.

### **High School (9th - 12th Grade) Exit Procedure**

Exiting any High Ability (formerly known as Gifted and Talented), Honors, AP or IB class happens on an individual basis. Conferences are coordinated with the parent/guardian to determine the appropriate placement of the student.

### **Incoming Transfer Students (High School)**

Math and Science placement is determined by placement test scores, past grades and previous courses taken. English and Social Studies placement is determined by past grades and previous courses taken.

## **Appeals Process (K-12th Grade)**

Parents/Guardians who disagree with the identification of their child must submit in writing an appeal form stating the reasons they believe their child should receive high ability services. The High Ability committee will review the student's records and make a determination. In some cases, the administration of a parallel test of ability or achievement may take place. The principal or high ability teacher will notify the parent/guardian of the decision. Appeals will be considered from the first day of school until September 30th. No further appeals will be considered after September 30th. Appeal forms are available in either school office or on the Argos Community School Corporation Website.

## **Parent Resources/Links**

**Differentiating Instruction: Rethinking Traditional Practices (Bertie Kingore, Ph.D.)**

**High Achiever, Gifted Learner, Creative Thinker (Bertie Kingore, Ph.D.)**

**Parenting Gifted Children (Bertie Kingore, Ph.D.)**

**Davidson Institute for Talent Development**

**Hoagies' Gifted Education Page**

**National Association for Gifted Children**

**Supporting Emotional Needs of Gifted Children (SENG)**

**Gifted (High Ability) Characteristics of Children**

**Indiana Association for the Gifted**

**Comparison-Bright Child, Gifted Child**

**Gifted Kids - Signs, Challenges, and More**

**High Ability Intensity Archives**

**Online Parent Support Groups**

## Summer Programs/Enrichment Opportunities

*The information shared on this page is a courtesy and not an endorsement of the programs.*

Gifted Education Resource Institute: [www.purdue.edu/geri](http://www.purdue.edu/geri)

Center For Gifted Studies and Talent Development: <http://www.bsu.edu/gifted/>

Camp Resources:

<http://www.campresource.com/summer-camps/academic-camps.cfm/gifted-and-talented-camps>

## Program Evaluation Plan

The ACS High Ability Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Building Principal, HA Coordinator, and teacher.

Each student will be evaluated using the following measures:

- Elementary: Student success will be measured by grade level achievement testing that notes growth and are norm referenced. Each child's individual growth should be demonstrated even if that child began the year proficient on grade level standards.
- Middle School: Program effectiveness will be measured by achievement testing that notes growth and are norm referenced.
- High School: Program effectiveness will be measured by success in honors courses, including AP classes. Additionally student success will be measured on the PSAT.

Additionally, the district high ability plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Broad-Based Planning Committee. The Indiana State Board of Education requires the establishment of a Broad-Based Planning Committee (BBPC) that meets at least annually to review the local education plan for high ability learners. The committee must have participation from diverse groups representing the school and community.



Argos Community Schools  
401 N. First Street  
Argos, Indiana 46501  
(574)892-5136

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grade level and school for next year: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent(s) name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please know that the committee made their decision based upon valid data and upon what they believe would be the best placement for your child. If you do make an appeal, please support your appeal with information (such as a clerical error in data entry) that you want the committee to consider. You may attach additional sheets or write on the back, if needed. Boredom, GPA, and grades on report card are not reasons for an appeal. If any outside testing has been done, please submit a copy of the testing report(s).

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete the Placement Appeal Form and email or deliver to Megan Huys, High Ability Coordinator [mhuys@argos.k12.in.us](mailto:mhuys@argos.k12.in.us)