



High Ability Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

This document serves to support administrators, educators, and families related to high ability education. In accordance with Indiana Codes and Administrative Codes, Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) has developed guidance on high ability programming, to include identification, differentiated curriculum and instruction, guidance and counseling, professional development, and program evaluation. In addition, this resource is provided to assist applicants of the *High Ability Program Grant*.

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Number	Question	Answer
Definitions and Identification		
1	Are all public local educational agencies (LEAs) required to have a high ability program?	Yes. All public school districts are to have a high ability program that identifies students needing more than the core curriculum to be appropriately challenged. These programs must provide differentiated curriculum and instruction to enable identified students to reach the highest possible level at every stage of student development kindergarten through grade 12.
2	What is the definition of a high ability student in Indiana?	High ability students as defined by Indiana Code (IC) 20-36-1 as a student who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>performs</i> at or shows the <i>potential for performing</i> at an outstanding level of accomplishment <i>in at least one (1) domain</i> when compared with other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and • is characterized by <i>exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests</i>.
3	How are students to be identified?	Schools are to identify students using a multifaceted assessment process, as outlined in IC 20-36-2-2 , including each of the following assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance-based assessment • Potential-based assessment • Other forms of assessment <p>This process is to ensure that students not identified by traditional assessments because of economic disadvantage, cultural background, underachievement, or disabilities are included. The assessments must identify students with high abilities in the general intellectual domain and specific academic domains, and the results are included with the student identification number.</p>



4	What qualifies as a high ability program?	<p>In order to qualify as a high ability program, per IC 20-36-2-2, a school must provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educational opportunities that encourage high ability students to reach the highest possible level at every stage of development. ● A differentiated program for high ability students and include a plan with the following sections filed at IDOE and available for public review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multifaceted student identification process, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Performance-based assessments. ■ Potential-based assessments. ■ Other forms of assessments. ○ Curriculum and instructional practices. ○ Guidance and Counseling plan ○ Professional development plan ○ Program evaluation plan ● A broad-based planning committee to design and monitor the continuous development and implementation of the levels of services for high ability students. ● Approval by the local governing body.
5	In what grades should the multifaceted assessment process for high ability identification occur?	<p>It is recommended to formally identify all students at key shifts in district structure that are typically aligned with students' cognitive development. These shifts typically occur between kindergarten to first grade, primary to intermediate elementary, intermediate elementary to middle school, and middle school to high school. Grades kindergarten, second, and fifth grade are the most common identification years.</p>
6	Are students to be assessed every year for high ability identification?	<p>This is a local determination as set by the submitted multifaceted assessment plan for identification that is on file at IDOE. The process for identification must be inclusive and provide continuous access and opportunity to all students who need more than the core curriculum provides to be appropriately challenged at all stages of development.</p>
7	Do students need to show high ability in all domains to be identified?	<p>No. A student may be designated as high ability in math, English/language arts, general intellectual (both math and English/language arts), and/or other. The student must receive differentiated curriculum and instruction in the areas of their designated high ability. If the designation of 'other' is chosen, subsequent services must be defined and differentiated curriculum and instruction provided.</p>
8	Once a student is designated high ability, does this designation ever change?	<p>A student is defined as high ability if they perform or show the potential to perform at an outstanding level in comparison to peers of the same age, experience, and environment. The parameters of this are determined locally and may be different between districts. Additionally, as a student develops, they may begin to be appropriately challenged without the need for additional differentiated curriculum and instruction specific to high ability. School districts</p>



		are to have an exit policy in place for situations in which a student no longer needs high ability programming.
9	Can ILEARN Checkpoint data be used for high ability identification?	The ILEARN Checkpoints may be used as the achievement measure for high ability identification for grades 3-8. However, it is important to use a minimum of two checkpoints when considering high ability identification in order to get the most accurate measure of achievement. Grades K-2 will need a different norm-referenced, adaptive measure of achievement.
Advanced Coursework		
10	Are high ability designated students required to take advanced courses in middle and high school?	No. However, a student who is designated as high ability must be receiving a differentiated curriculum and instruction in the domain of their ability. For instance, if they are designated as high ability in math, then they should be enrolled in the highest level math course at each grade level in order to be appropriately challenged. If they are appropriately challenged in a general math course, then they must have gone through the exit process and are no longer designated high ability.
11	Should all students enrolled in an advanced course in middle and high school be designated as high ability?	No. Advanced courses must be open to all students regardless of their high ability designation.
12	How does the middle school advanced math course automatic enrollment requirement differ from High Ability identification?	Students may qualify for placement in an advanced math course based on auto-enrollment criteria, even if they have not been formally identified as high ability. Students identified through the High Ability process and students placed via auto-enrollment—may or may not be enrolled in the same advanced classes. Click here for additional information on High Ability education.
13	Are subsidies available for Advanced Placement (AP) or other advanced course testing?	IDOE continues to support Indiana students through AP and Cambridge International exam funding. The state's biennial budget provides funding to cover the exam fees for AP and Cambridge International exams taken by Indiana students in grades 9-12 who are enrolled in an accredited public or non-public school. A maximum of two exams per student, per year may be funded. Additional information can be found in this memo .
14	Does the state offer reimbursement for in-person college courses taken by high school students?	No, the state does not provide reimbursement for college courses for high school students. Many schools offer AP and dual enrollment courses at the local level at a lower cost, and several options for college-level classes are available via Indiana's Course Access Portal (iCAP) . Schools offering AP, International Baccalaureate (IB), dual credit, and/or honors courses for high ability students fulfill the requirements regarding high ability under Indiana Code.



15	Are Graduation Pathways required?	Yes, Graduation Pathways are required for students beginning in the graduating class of 2023.
16	Do high school math courses completed in middle school count toward graduation requirements?	Yes. High school courses completed before grade nine used to fulfill a high school course or credit requirement, require the grade and credit for the course to be included on the student’s high school transcript, and are factored into the student’s cumulative high school GPA.
Programming and Services		
17	Must all high ability identified students receive the same services?	<p>No. Variability exists among those with high ability. Some students need services only in math or only in English/language arts. Additionally, local school districts may offer different levels of coursework with placement dependent on different data points established locally.</p> <p>One size does not fit all. Students with ability alone need instruction at a faster pace and greater depth but not at the same level as those with high ability and, correspondingly, high achievement. Some students will score high on both ability and performance indicators, while others may only score high on the ability measure due to a lack of opportunity to learn prior to school or a disability (twice exceptionality). Both groups of students are identified as high ability and should be provided appropriately differentiated curriculum and instruction to meet their needs.</p>
18	How do I know which program model is best for my school district?	<p>When planning appropriate programming and services for students of high ability, districts must consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How high ability students will be grouped, organized, or provided with individual plans for the most effective learning; ● What training the teacher has or needs to most effectively teach and plan learning experiences for students of high ability; ● What content, standards, and pace are most appropriate for these students; and ● What instructional models, strategies, projects, and products are most appropriate for promoting academic growth?
19	Does my school have to provide guidance and counseling?	Yes, in accordance with 511 IAC 6-9.1-2 a differentiated program for high ability students must include a guidance and counseling plan. Children with high abilities may have additional affective needs resulting from their increased capacity to think beyond their years, greater intensity in response, combinations of unique interests, personality characteristics, and conflicts that are different from those of their age level peers. It is important to provide a systematic and differentiated program of affective services, K-12, for these students; this



		proactive approach will facilitate development of their high potential and promote their positive adjustment.
High Ability Program Grant		
20	When is the High Ability grant cycle and how do I apply?	The grant cycle runs July 1-June 30. Applications are available in May and are sent to district high ability coordinators to complete. Applications are due in August and award notifications are sent in October. For the most current and specific timeline, visit the High Ability page on IDOE website.
21	I have accepted my grant award, how do I access funds?	For FY26 (2025-2026 school year), funds are received through a cash request form in the grant portal, Euna. Beginning FY27 (2026-2027), funds will be dispersed via reimbursement. The process and forms for this will be made available after the FY27 grant award notifications are sent out.
22	Does my district have to submit a final report?	In accordance with IC 20-36-2-1b , each district must annually submit a report regarding the use of High Ability Program Grant funds. The instructions and form to complete this report is made available in October by IDOE to high ability coordinators.
Family Resources		
23	I don't agree with my school district's decision about my child's high ability identification. What can I do?	The Appeals and Exit Procedures outlines what to do if you disagree with a decision about high ability, such as identification, advanced learning plans, or programming. Check your district's high ability website or contact your district's high ability staff to learn about their procedures for appeals and how to start the process.
24	Who is the primary contact in a school district for concerns or questions regarding high ability programming?	Start with your student's teacher. They should be able to explain what accommodations are being made for high ability students, or should refer you to the district high ability coordinator for clarification. You may also email IDOE's High Ability team for additional support.
25	If I move and my student changes school districts, can I expect they will receive the exact same high ability programming in the new district?	Not necessarily. While Indiana requires that public schools provide high ability accommodations, each local school district determines how those services will be delivered. When planning a move, reach out to the new district to find out what services are available so you can be prepared.



Indiana Department of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

26	My child has been identified as high ability, but attends a non-public school through a school choice voucher. What services must be provided, and is there grant money available to pay for extracurricular high ability programming?	In Indiana, the High Ability Code and the High Ability Grant only applies to students in public schools. Non-public schools set their own guidelines and requirements for meeting student needs.
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For additional information, please email studentpathways_highability@doe.in.gov.

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