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Mission Statement

The mission of the Hattiesburg Public Schools REACH gifted program is to address the needs of intellectually gifted children and provide the necessary instructional modifications to increase these students' skills in:

- Autonomous learning
- Creative, productive thinking
- Metacognition
- Developing and maintaining healthy, positive, enriching relationships
- Developing appropriate expectations for and understanding of the self

These instructional modifications include an **environment** that allows intellectually gifted children to learn from one another, a **curriculum** that addresses the unique characteristics and needs of the gifted by balancing cognitive and affective instruction/experiences, and a **delivery system** that employs multiple instructional strategies to accommodate individual learning differences.

Definition of Giftedness

Intellectually Gifted students are children and youth who are found to have an exceptionally high degree of intelligence as documented through the identification process. The needs of these students should be addressed based on the program options provided in the *Outcomes for Intellectually Gifted Education Programs Grades 2-8 in Mississippi*.*

*MDE, 2013, Regulations for the Gifted Education Programs in MS

Purpose

The purpose of the gifted education program is to ensure that gifted children who demonstrate unusually high potential as described in the preceding definition are identified and offered an appropriate education based upon their exceptional abilities. Because of their unusual capabilities, they require uniquely qualitatively different educational experiences not available in the regular classroom. These uniquely different programs are required to enable gifted students to realize their abilities and potential contributions to self and society.*

*MDE, 2013, Regulations for the Gifted Education Programs in MS

Instructional Management Plan (IMP)

The Hattiesburg Public School District Instructional Management Plan (IMP) for the gifted program guides students and gifted education teachers in participating in the gifted education program.

The activities in the gifted class should develop and enhance the process skills in the outcomes document, the teaching strategies notebook, and required components of the gifted program standards document. Some of the activities should be short-term exploratory activities that introduce students to ideas and concepts not normally covered in the regular education program. The activities should enhance the integration of advanced content and individual student's interests utilizing higher level thinking skills, creative problem solving, critical thinking skills, research skills, personal growth and human relations exercises, leadership skills, and creative expression. Activities should also create an appreciation for the multicultural composition of the school and community.

The IMP for the Hattiesburg Public School District includes the following components:

1. Mission/Philosophy statement, including goals and objectives
2. The components of the MS Gifted Education Program Standards:
 - a. Differentiated activities
 - b. Scope and sequence of program process skills (outcomes)
 - c. Career exploration and life skills
 - d. Exposure to and appreciation for the visual and performing arts
 - e. In-class counseling for gifted students
 - f. Socio-emotional needs of gifted students
 - g. Affective needs of gifted students
 - h. Needs of gifted at-risk students
3. Program outcomes for the specific gifted program(s) offered.

Intellectually Gifted Education

Six Steps of the Student Identification Process:

- I. Referral Procedures
(Mass Screening Referral; Individual Referral)
- II. Referral LSC Review
- III. Parental Permission
- IV. Assessment
- V. Assessment Report
- VI. Eligibility Determination by the District LSC

The identification process shall consist of a combination of subjective and objective measures to determine eligibility for the gifted programs. No single evaluation method or instrument adequately identifies students who are gifted. Thus, a multi-factored identification process must be followed to ensure a fair evaluation of each individual student.

The identification process shall provide an equitable opportunity for the inclusion of students with an emerging potential for gifted – students who are culturally diverse, underachieving, disabled under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guidelines, physically handicapped, ADD/ADHD, as well as students who exhibit classroom behavior such as extreme shyness, short attention spans, disruptiveness, continual questioning, and anxiety. Throughout the identification process, close attention and careful consideration shall be paid to all information available and collected on each individual student and how that information dictates the kinds of instruments and measures that should be used to correctly assess that student.

All instruments and measures administered must have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are being used. Hearing, vision, and general physical examinations are suggested but are not required.

Student Identification Process

Stage I: Referral

Many intellectually gifted students are not going to be high achieving, teacher pleasing students. All measures collected throughout the identification process shall be selected based upon the strengths of the individual student being considered.

Mass Screening Referral:

Mass screening (the screening of all students in a particular grade level at one time) for intellectually gifted students shall occur at one or more grade levels annually.

A normed group measure of intelligence will be used in the Mass Screening Referral process. This process should assist in identifying students in underrepresented populations.

- Students who obtain a full-scale score at or above the 90th percentile on the normed group measure of intelligence shall move forward in the referral process.
- Students who scored at or above the 85th percentile but lower than the 90th percentile on the normed group measure of intelligence shall be subjected to an Emerging Potential for Gifted Referral Checklist. If these students meet the criteria on the checklist, they shall move forward in the referral process.

The next step in the process will consist of the collection of substantiated student data obtained through the use of other objective and subjective measures. A student who is being referred through the Mass Screening Referral process must satisfy two of the Additional Criteria Options before moving forward to the LSC Review of Referral Data stage.

Additional Criteria Options for Mass Screening Referrals:

- A score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist
- A score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity
- A score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership
- A score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test
- A score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability
- A score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months
- Other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students

Individual Referral:

A student may be referred by a parent, teacher, counselor, administrator, peer, self, or anyone else having reason to believe that the student might be intellectually gifted. The person initiating the referral shall sign the referral form and date it. A student who is being referred through the Individual Referral process must satisfy three of the Additional Criteria Options before moving forward to the LSC Review of Referral Data stage.

Additional Criteria Options for Individual Referrals:

- A score at or above the 90th percentile on a group measure of intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months
- A score at or above the superior range on a normed published characteristics of giftedness checklist
- A score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of creativity
- A score at or above the superior range on a normed published measure of leadership
- A score at or above the 90th percentile on total language, total math, total reading, total science, total social studies, or the composite on a normed achievement test
- A score at or above the 90th percentile on a normed measure of cognitive ability
- A score at or above the 90th percentile on an existing measure of individual intelligence that has been administered within the past twelve months
- Other measures that are documented in the research on identification of intellectually gifted students

NOTE: Any student who does not meet the minimum acceptable criteria (score at the 90th percentile or above) on the normed group measure of intelligence during the Mass Screening Referral Process and does not qualify for the Emerging Potential for Gifted criteria, can be referred by anyone for the Individual Referral Screening Process. The individually referred student shall not be excluded from the referral process by their performance on the normed group measure of intelligence administered during the Mass Screening Referral Process.

The Jacob Javits Act (PL 107-110 sec.9101) declares that intellectual ability and academic ability are two distinct and separate areas of performance. Accordingly, while grades and/or achievement test scores might be an indicator of giftedness, neither grades nor achievement test scores shall eliminate a student from the identification process for the intellectually gifted program.

Stage 2: LSC Review of Referral Data

The Local Survey Committee (LSC) shall include an administrator and a gifted education teacher. It may also include regular education teachers, school psychologists, psychometrists and parents.

The Local Survey Committee will review all data that has been collected and make one of the following decisions:

1. The student has satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and should move forward to the assessment stage
2. The student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures; however, the LSC feels strongly that additional data should be collected and the student reconsidered at that time
3. The student has not satisfied minimal criteria on at least three measures and the identification process should stop.

Once the referral form has been initiated, signed and dated, only the LSC or parents can stop the identification process.

Provisions for Emerging Potential for Gifted Populations

At this point the LSC shall make the decision as to the possibility that the student could be eligible for consideration as a candidate for an emerging potential for gifted assessment. If it is believed that the student might have emerging gifted potential, then the Emerging Potential for Intellectually Gifted Assessment Checklist should be completed for possible use during the assessment process. The Emerging Potential for Gifted category makes provisions for certain factors that exist that may put the student at a disadvantage when inappropriate instruments are used during the assessment process.

Stage 3: Parental Permission for Testing

At this time, district personnel shall:

- obtain written parental permission for testing
- notify parents in writing about their rights under FERPA

Once the referral process begins parents must be informed of the information/data that is collected. Parents shall be made aware of their rights to an explanation of the results of the Assessment Team Report.

Stage 4: Assessment

Once parental permission for testing has been obtained, the following documents will be sent to the district office for assessment:

- Referral Form, completed, with LSC decision, date and signatures
- Supporting documents (at least 3: mass screening; measure of giftedness; measure of creativity; measure of leadership; and other additional criteria options that may have been collected)
- Emerging Potential for Gifted form, if collected
- Gifted Pupil Personal Data Sheet (GPPDS), with parent signature and date
- Test Selection Checklist from teacher and parent

The psychometrist/licensed examiner will review all data collected and use that information to select the most appropriate test of intelligence for the student.

The individual test of intelligence shall be administered by a licensed examiner. In no case will the examiner be related to the student being tested. Standard operating procedures should be followed during the selection and administration of all assessments as reflected in the examiner's manuals.

A student must score at or above the 91st percentile for the composite/full scale score or the 91st percentile on approved subtests (as per publisher) in order to satisfy eligibility criteria.

Emerging Potential for Gifted:

Students who have satisfied criteria on the Emerging Potential for Gifted Checklist who did not satisfy minimal acceptable criteria on an individual test of intelligence, but, did score at least at the 84th percentile or have a scale score that falls within the range of the 90th percentile confidence interval of the state minimum scale/percentile score, may be administered one of the following additional measures to determine eligibility:

1. A test of cognitive abilities with a minimal score at the 90th percentile,
2. A group intelligence measure with a minimal score at the 90th percentile, or
3. A district-developed matrix approved by the MDE.

Potentially Twice-Exceptional Students/Provisional Eligibility:

Students who already have an eligibility ruling under IDEA and are being assessed for an intellectually gifted eligibility, and who did not satisfy all of the required minimal acceptable referral criteria but did meet at least one referral criterion shall have their results reviewed by the LSC and a licensed examiner. If the student scores at or above the 91st percentile on the individual test of intelligence (composite score or approved subtest score) or in the opinion of the reviewing committee, would benefit from participation in the intellectually gifted program, the student may be granted a provisional eligibility for the intellectually gifted program for a period of one year. At the end of that year, the student's teacher of the gifted shall meet with the review committee to discuss the student's performance in the program. If the student has demonstrated success in the program, the LSC shall change the eligibility status from provisional to regular eligibility. If the student has not been successful in the program, the provisional eligibility shall be revoked.

Identification criteria, as approved by the MDE on the local district's Gifted Education Program Proposal, must be satisfied for a student to be ruled eligible by the LSC for the intellectually gifted education program.

Stage 5: Assessment Report

The examiner shall provide a signed and dated report of the test administration to include testing conditions, scores on all subtests or subscales, and the strengths and weaknesses of the student.

District personnel shall write an Assessment Report, which must contain the following components:

1. Student's name
2. Name of at least three measures from Stage 1: Referral that were used to determine the need to administer an individual test of intelligence
3. Results of each measure
4. Name of individual who administered or completed each measure and the date administered or completed
5. Test behaviors for any individually administered test(s)
6. Interpretation of the results of each individually administered test
7. Name of the person who administered the individual test of intelligence and date test was administered
8. Qualifications of the individual who administered the individual test of intelligence
9. Results of the individual test of intelligence to include scores on all subtests and identified strengths and weaknesses
10. Name of the person responsible for writing the Assessment Report, his/her signature and position
11. Date of the Assessment Report.

Stage 6: Eligibility Determination by the District LSC

Once the Assessment Report is finalized, the LSC shall meet to review all data and determine if eligibility criteria have or have not been satisfied. The LSC shall rule that the student is or is not eligible for the intellectually gifted program.

Parental Notification

District personnel shall notify in writing the parents of each student tested for the intellectually gifted program about the assessment results. District personnel shall offer to explain any of the results about which the parents have questions. District personnel shall also notify parents in writing about their rights under FERPA.

Confidentiality Statement

All information/data collected as part of the identification process shall be placed in an individual eligibility file for each student. These files and the information contained therein shall not be placed in the student's cumulative record folder. The files shall be maintained in a separate locked storage facility/file cabinet and access to the information shall be restricted to those personnel working directly with the identification process, working directly in the gifted education program or that have a documented need to know. Upon request, parents have the right to view their child's records at any time.

Parental Permission for Placement

After a student has been ruled eligible for one of the gifted programs, written parental permission for placement shall be obtained before the student is placed in the program.

Academic Performance in Regular Classroom

If the gifted student has difficulty keeping up with regular classroom work, a conference will be held with the parent, classroom teacher, gifted education teacher, an administrator, and the student (if appropriate) to discuss the student's academic performance and to determine an appropriate course of action. The conference and plan of action will be documented, and follow-up conferences will be held as needed.

<p>Participation in the Gifted Education Program is an entitlement under State Law (MS Gifted Education Act of 1989, MS Code Sections 37-23-171 through 37-23-181.</p>

Homework/Classwork

The Hattiesburg Public School District will follow MDE Regulations concerning work a student misses while in the gifted program which state that a student in the gifted program:

- may not be required to make up class work missed when they are scheduled to be in the gifted classroom.
- shall be held accountable for demonstrating mastery of concepts and information on regularly scheduled classroom assignments and tests.

It is not reasonable to expect that intellectually gifted students, by virtue of having been granted a gifted eligibility, will make all A's and B's.

In-State Transfers

Students who have a valid Mississippi gifted eligibility ruling do not have to be reevaluated when transferring from one Mississippi school district to another. Gifted eligibility from another school district within the state of Mississippi will be accepted in the Hattiesburg School District. A Consent for Placement Form will be signed by the parent prior to the student's being served in the gifted program.

Out-of-State Transfers

As per MDE Regulations, 2013, a student moving to Mississippi with a gifted eligibility from another state must satisfy Mississippi eligibility criteria before being considered for placement in the gifted program. The eligibility ruling from another state may be used to initiate the referral process in Mississippi. There is no temporary placement in the gifted program while the student goes through the eligibility process within the local school district.

Anyone with knowledge of the student's out-of-state eligibility may initiate the referral. Once the referral is initiated, the six steps for referral to placement will be followed.

Annual Reassessment of Students

In keeping with MS Department of Education regulations, a committee shall meet at least annually to reassess each gifted student's continuation in the gifted program. The committee must include (*at least*):

- the student's teacher of the gifted and
- a designated administrative representative.

Documentation of the meeting will be maintained and will include:

- the name(s) of the student(s) discussed
- a list of the committee members present and
- the date of the meeting.

A Discontinuance of Services Form (School Request) will be completed for each student who is not recommended to continue in the program.

According to MDE Regulations, 2013, since participation in the gifted program is an entitlement under law, the student should remain in the gifted program as long as they are being successful in the program. Grades and/or success in the regular education program are the responsibility of the regular classroom teachers and should not be considered as a reason for removal from the gifted program.

Discontinuance of Services (Parent Request)

If a parent determines that it would be in their child's best interest to discontinue participation in the gifted program, they may request a discontinuance of services. The Discontinuance of Services (Parent Request) Form will be completed and will be signed by the parent, the teacher of the gifted and an administrator. However, the parent would not be required to sign the form if he/she has sent written documentation to the Gifted teacher requesting the removal of their child from the gifted program. In that case, the written documentation would be attached to the form and the form would be signed by the gifted teacher and an administrator. The student will continue to be eligible for gifted education services and may participate in the future should the parent and the LSC at the school determine that the student would benefit from reinstatement. It is recommended that reinstatement occur at the beginning of a new semester.

Discontinuance of Services (School Request)

The Annual Reassessment Committee may determine that the student should exit the program for the following reasons:

- lack of progress in the program
- unsatisfactory participation in the program.

Should the committee determine that the student should exit the program, the student's parents will be notified and given the opportunity to discuss the decision with the committee *before the student is removed*. A Discontinuance of Services (School Request) Form will be completed and signed by the committee members and the parent. The parents will indicate whether or not they agree with the decision.

Should the parent fail to respond to the teacher's attempts to schedule a meeting, the LSC should meet to discuss the removal of the student. The committee should do the following:

- document attempts to contact and/or meet with the parent (more than one)
- conference with the student concerning the pending dismissal

Should the parents not agree to the removal of the student from the program, they will be granted a hearing before a review committee. The committee will be appointed by and will include the Director of Student Services.

*Withholding permission to attend gifted classes should not be used as a disciplinary measure or as academic punishment by parents or school personnel.

*Gifted education teachers are to be responsible for following discipline procedures for their students while they are in the gifted classroom.

*Gifted students are to be responsible for participating in the enrichment activities provided in their gifted program. Failure to do so could result in dismissal from the program.

Hearing Process

Parents who do not agree with the school based committee decision to remove a student from the gifted program will present their concerns, orally or in writing, to the principal of the school. The principal and parent will attempt to resolve the matter informally.

If the parents are not satisfied with the action taken by the principal, the parents shall, within five (5) school days after the meeting with the principal, put their concerns in writing and present them to the gifted education teacher at the school. The gifted education teacher will schedule a meeting of the District Gifted Review Committee within five (5) school days or a timeframe agreed upon by the parents. Parents will be invited to attend the meeting. The committee will render a written decision based on information shared during the meeting.

Annual Self-Evaluation of the Gifted Education Program

The Hattiesburg Public School District will complete a self-evaluation of the Gifted Education Program each year in accordance with the *Mississippi Gifted Education Program Standards*, following the rubric format of the standards. A copy of the self-evaluation will be submitted to MDE at the end of each school year. The school district will address the needs of identified gifted education program students by meeting, at minimum, the following components of Criteria I-VII of the MDE's gifted education program regulations.

Criterion I: Curriculum and Instruction

1. The gifted education program provides for identified gifted students a qualitatively different learning experience designed to meet the special needs of gifted students.
2. The HPD's IMP for gifted students provides for differentiated curriculum that is in compliance with SBE policy and state law.
3. The HPD publicizes options for high ability students and give consideration to parental requests for such on a student-by-student basis.
4. The HPD's IMP includes a scope and sequence of process skills as defined in the MDE gifted program outcomes.
5. Career exploration and life skills opportunities are included in the district's IMP for gifted students.
6. The HPD's IMP for the gifted program includes a differentiated program of instruction that exposes students to the visual and performing arts.

Criterion II: Program Administration and Management

1. At least one of the district's designated gifted contact person or coordinator holds a gifted endorsement.
2. Gifted students receive at a minimum the mandated 240 minutes per week of services in an approved gifted education program.
3. There is evidence of established means of communication with advocacy groups.
4. There is evidence or record of established correspondence with the MDE.
5. There is evidence that the gifted program staff has established on-going communication with parents.
6. There is evidence of regular communication between gifted program staff and other instructional staff and administrative district personnel.
7. The HPD ensures that gifted program teachers have available adequate resources to sustain the goals and objectives of the gifted program; and that these resources are equitable when compared to resources for other district programs.

Criterion III: Program Design

1. Gifted program services are available to all intellectually gifted students in grades 2-6.
2. The HPSD makes appropriate use of available state funds to satisfy the programming needs of the district's gifted students.
3. Gifted programming is guided by a clearly articulated mission/philosophy statement and accompanying goals and objectives.
4. Gifted students are grouped together in a resource room in an approved gifted education program.
5. The HPSD policies include provisions for the needs of gifted students.

Criterion IV: Program Evaluation

1. An annual self-evaluation is conducted and based on the gifted standards. The results are reported and used for improvement of the program.
2. A program evaluation is conducted regularly and solicits relevant information from students, parents, teachers and building administrators.
3. A written evaluation report(s) is made available.

Criterion V: Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling

1. The gifted program teacher provides specific activities that address the social-emotional needs of the gifted students and is available to provide individual guidance to gifted students.
2. The gifted program teacher provides career guidance specific to the needs of gifted students.
3. The gifted program teacher provides guidance services to address the needs of gifted at-risk students.
4. The gifted program teacher provides a curriculum that addresses the affective needs of gifted students.
5. A process is in place to identify and serve underachieving students who are gifted or potentially gifted.

Criterion VI: Professional Development

1. Gifted program teachers are required to attend professional development provided by the district regarding the appropriate education of gifted students.
2. The HPSD allows gifted program teachers to attend at least one non-district professional development activity per year that is designed specifically for teaching gifted students.
3. Professional development materials pertaining to gifted education are available in the district.
4. The district provides training to enable teachers to develop an appropriate differentiated curriculum that is in compliance with the IMP.
5. The gifted education teachers are endorsed in gifted education.

Criterion VII: Student Identification and Assessment

1. Written information about the district's gifted education program, including how to refer and identify students, is available to all school faculty members and the community at large.
2. All students comprise the initial pool of potential recipients for gifted education services and universal screening for gifted education services occurs at one or more grade levels.
3. Referrals are accepted from anyone who believes the student might be eligible for gifted program services.
4. Parents are provided information regarding characteristics of giftedness and gifted programming options offered by the district.
5. The student assessment process utilizes multiple assessment measures that include both objective and subjective instruments.
6. Assessment instruments used are reliable and valid for identifying gifted students and are in compliance with MDE requirements.
7. The HPSD has written procedures for student identification, informed consent, notification of results, student reassessment and student exiting.
8. The HPSD has written procedures and guidelines for parent appeals in policy.
9. The assessment instruments selected by assessment personnel make provisions for students with limited English proficiency, cultural differences, economic considerations, environmental factors, achievement levels and disabilities.
10. The HPSD provides professional development for all personnel involved in the assessment and identification of potentially gifted students.