

# **WAHOO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

## ***High Ability Learner Program Handbook***

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## **I. HANDBOOK PURPOSE**

The purpose of this handbook is to state philosophy, identification procedures, and services of the high ability program of Wahoo Public Schools. WPS criterion for classifying high ability students is the same throughout all grade levels of our school, but implementation, as with all programs is the responsibility of the building administrator. All personnel share an interest in placing high ability students in programs best suited to their needs and abilities. It is especially important that these students be aware of the options open to them.

This handbook serves the purpose of assisting school staff in making available learning opportunities designed to:

- Help high ability learners develop knowledge and skills in their area(s) of competence.
- Help high ability learners develop the attitudes and skills needed for a) in-depth study of topics, ideas and issues and b) self-directed learning in one's environment.
- Allow high ability learners to learn from and interact with others.
- Help high ability learners develop the attitudes and skills necessary to function in groups in both leadership and support roles.
- Help high ability learners understand and use their unique abilities.

## **II. DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY**

The Wahoo Public Schools District, in partnership with students and parents, is committed to an educational program that recognizes the unique characteristics of each student and strives to enhance all aspects of student development. The High Ability Learner Program is an integral part of this commitment. This program is based on a multidimensional instructional approach that includes a wide range of experiences. The differentiation of educational programs to meet the needs of gifted learners is a major responsibility of the school and the classroom teacher.

## **III. BELIEF STATEMENTS**

Educational programs for high ability learners are based on the beliefs that:

- High ability learner capabilities are evidenced in all races, creeds, national origins, genders, physical abilities, and economic strata.
- All learners with high ability should have an education free from economic and cultural bias.
- Individuals with high abilities have unique learning needs and require a variety of challenging experiences that will enable them to demonstrate their potential.
- Learners with high ability come from diverse economic and cultural settings and must be identified.
- Services shall be provided to address their educational needs contingent upon available local, state and federal funding.
- Educators have a responsibility to be adequately trained to meet the needs of learners with high ability.
- Parents/caregivers are valued partners in the education of learners with high ability.
- Educational excellence for learners with high ability requires a commitment of financial and human resources.

## **IV. DEFINITION**

Learner with High Ability – “Learner with high ability means a student who gives evidence of high performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative or artistic capacity or in specific academics fields and who requires service or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to develop those capabilities fully”, *Nebraska Revised Statute Sec. 79-1107 (3)*. The label “gifted” in a school setting means that when compared to others his or her age or grade, a child has an advanced capacity to learn and apply what is learned in one or more subject areas, or in the performing or fine arts. This advanced capacity requires modifications to the regular curriculum to ensure these children are challenged and learn new material, *National Association for Gifted Children*.

## **V. PROGRAM GOALS**

Wahoo Public Schools shall attempt to provide a program of educational experience designed to meet the individual needs of high ability learners through the following:

1. Assessing and identifying students of high academic ability in grade three through grade twelve.
2. Provide services for identified students that incorporate curriculum modifications, accommodations, teaching methods, activities, and/or instructional materials designed to meet the needs of high ability learners.
3. Communicating the various aspects and successes of the program for high ability learners to staff, students, parents, and the community.
4. Evaluating program goals, activities, materials and procedures.
5. Recognizing and nurturing educational excellence.

## **VI. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

1. Foster an understanding of the unique characteristics and needs of high ability learners.
2. Design and implement an organizational structure that will facilitate curricular, extracurricular, and social/emotional experiences for high ability learners.
3. Provide human and material resources necessary to meet the program goals.
4. Allow flexibility in learning environments so that students can pursue individual interests and advanced study.
5. Provide educational opportunities appropriate to their level of achievement to continue their academic progress. The district will facilitate educational opportunities for students that have outstripped our curriculum.
6. Provide opportunities for professional development in the area of high ability learner education.
7. Make information available to parents and staff about specific areas of programming; such as student identification, curricular and instructional options, and program evaluation procedures.
8. Staff will generate HAL opportunities in their curricular area Professional Learning Communities.
9. Communicate the program and services for high ability learners to stakeholders on a periodic basis.
10. Conduct evaluations whereby faculty, students (current and previous) and parents assess: the progress of planning and implementing students experiences, exchanging information and ideas relating to all aspects of the program, and using evaluative data to make appropriate modifications in program practices.

## **VII. PROGRAM SELECTION**

Identification is one of the most difficult areas to consider in developing a program for the high ability student. The definition of exceptional ability is bound to the criteria used for identification. For this reason, experts in the field propose identification based on valid and reliable measures collected from multiple sources. The primary sources will include:

- a. Standardized achievement tests (i.e. NWEA-MAP; NWEA-MPG)
- b. Individual ability test (i.e. IQ test)

Plus two or more of the following secondary sources:

- a. State Accountability tests (i.e. NSCAS-R, NSCAS-M)
- b. Scholastic aptitude measures (i.e. PSAT; SAT; ACT)
- c. Previous and present school achievement records
- d. Teacher matrix

Any student entering Wahoo Public Schools that was enrolled in a program of high ability learners at a previous school will be considered eligible for participation in the high ability learner program.

### **PHASES OF PROGRAM SELECTION**

#### **Phase I – Nomination**

- HAL building level facilitator reviews standardized test scores.
- Nomination can be generated by a teacher, parent, self or peer.

#### **Phase II – Screening**

Identify all students that have at least one of the following characteristics:

- Achievement level (must include reading and math) of 95% or 95<sup>th</sup> %ile or above on any two sub-tests of a standardized achievement test. Consecutive state level and/or MAP results will qualify.
- Score at or above the superior range (120-129) on an individual psychological/IQ test. (130+ identified as Highly Gifted.)

#### **Phase III – Identification**

With the students who have been identified in Phase II-Screening, further analysis is conducted of abilities using one or more of the following secondary sources:

- State Accountability tests (i.e. NSCAS-R, NSCAS-M, NSCAS-S)
- Scholastic aptitude measures (i.e. PSAT; SAT; ACT)
- Previous and present school achievement records
- Teacher matrix

#### **Notification**

Parents will be notified annually in writing of the opportunity for their child to participate in the District HAL Program. This notification will take place within the first quarter of school.

#### **Phase IV – Placement and Participation**

Placement and participation will be based on the following characteristics:

- Scores at or above 95% or the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on a standardized achievement test must include the areas of reading, and math; or
- Scores at or above 95 % or the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on a total composite on any group administered standardized achievement test; and/or

- Evidence that when compared to others his or her age or grade, a child has an advanced capacity to learn and apply what is learned in one or more subject areas, or in the performing or fine arts; and
- Previously listed scholastic aptitude measure

### **Appeal**

Any parent or child who disagrees with the results may appeal through their building administrator. The committee will review the individual case. The parent may submit a letter requesting their child to be considered for HAL placement to the building administrator. The student will be referred to Phase I of the identification process.

### **Non-participation**

Any parent or child who denies the opportunity to participate may submit a letter indicating non-participation through their building administrator.

## **VIII. DISTRICT LEVEL SERVICES**

### ***Curriculum Enrichment***

Provision of in-depth multidisciplinary exploration of content differentiated within and/or outside of the regular classroom.

- Visual/Conceptual Tools – graphic organizers, webs, thinking maps, task specific organizers
- Questioning for purposeful learning – divergent thinking/topic exploration
- Summer Institute
- Field trips
- Speakers
- Extending in the classroom
- ACT preparation
- Competitions, contests and project presentations
- Advanced courses in math and science
- Honors classes
- Independent study courses
- Dual enrollment courses
- Distance Learning courses
- Online courses
- Speech/One Act/Drama
- Vocal/Instrumental Music contests

### ***Curriculum Acceleration***

Flexible curriculum adapted to students' abilities rather than age or grade level.

- Collaboration
- Grouping
- Flexible pacing
- Accelerated class/grade

### ***Curriculum Compacting***

Eliminating work that has already been mastered. Streamlining work that may be mastered by students at a quicker pace than that of their peers.

- Pre-assessment
- Modification – flexible grouping/learning contracts
- Learning Activities – student interest and strengths, intellectual challenges

### ***Curriculum Differentiation***

Changes in content, process, and/or product addressing individual characteristics, needs, abilities, and interests.

- Broad based issues, themes or problems
- Cross curriculum integration
- Reinforcing experiences within an area of study
- Independent or self-directed study, and self-evaluation
- Higher level thinking skills
- Open-ended tasks
- Development of products that challenge existing ideas and produce new ideas
- Develop research skills and methods
- Online curriculum
- Access to distance learning courses-HS, college, dual credit

### ***Guidance and Counseling***

To meet the unique academic and affective needs of all gifted students

### *Other*

- Student government
- Leadership conferences

## **IX. MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Elem Counselor, MS Counselor, HS Counselor, Building Principals and HAL Facilitator (if appointed), and HAL Coordinator are responsible for the selection process and maintenance of student files. The HAL Coordinator will oversee the HAL Program and processes.

Individual classroom teachers have the responsibility for planning an appropriate program for HAL students through enrichment, acceleration, compacting, and/or differentiation. The Elem Counselor, MS Counselor, HS Counselor, Building Principals and HAL Facilitator (if appointed), and HAL Coordinator will serve as a resource in the development of the program.

At each building level, the HAL facilitator will:

- Identify students for placement in the program of high ability learner students.
- Communicate results of screening, evaluation, and eligibility or non-eligibility of students to parents.
- Maintain lists of students qualified for participation in the program based upon the District's multiple identification criteria.
- Communicate HAL eligibility to classroom teachers

## **X. PROGRAM EVALUATION**

A committee consisting of administrators, teachers, HAL coordinator and facilitators will meet annually to evaluate the effectiveness of the HAL program. The evaluation may include data gleaned from:

- Parent Surveys
- Staff Surveys
- HAL Student Surveys

## **XI. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The district will implement a comprehensive system of staff development offerings for teachers, counselors, facilitators, media specialists and administrators. Building level input will determine ongoing staff development needs.

## **XII. APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Parent Expectations**

**Appendix B: Classroom Teacher Referral**

**Appendix C: Sample letters/Teacher  
memo**

**Appendix D: Identification Flowchart**

## PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

It is quite natural for a parent to feel that his/her child should be identified for the High Ability Program. However, only a small percentage of children are identified for this program. Ongoing evaluations during K-3<sup>rd</sup> grades often reveal that although a child might be “bright”, s/he may not necessarily be a “high ability learner”.

The following show some of the different talents of a “Bright Child” and a “High Ability Learner”

### Bright Child

- Knows the answers
- Is attentive
- Has good ideas
- Works hard
- Answers the questions
- Top group
- Listens with interest
- Learns with ease
- 6-8- repetitions for mastery
- Understands ideas
- Enjoys peers
- Grasps the meaning
- Completes the assignments
- Is receptive
- Copies accurately
- Enjoys school
- Absorbs information
- Technician
- Good memorizer
- Is alert
- Is pleased with own learning
- Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation

### High Ability Learner

- Asks the questions
- Is highly curious
- Is mentally and physically involved
- Plays around, yet tests well
- Discusses in detail; elaborates
- Beyond the Group
- Shows strong feelings and opinions
- Already knows
- 1-2 repetitions for mastery
- Constructs abstractions
- Prefers adults
- Draws inferences
- Initiates projects
- Is intense
- Creates a new design
- Enjoys learning
- Manipulates information
- Inventor
- Good Guesser
- Is keenly observant
- Is highly self-critical
- Thrives on complexi



## CLASSROOM TEACHER REFERRAL FORM for HAL

Student Name

Grade

Teacher Name

Date

Please consider each of the items to describe this student. Consider each item separately and indicate the degree to which you have observed each characteristic. Please read the statements carefully and mark:

S-Seldom observed      O-Occasionally observed      F-Frequently observed      A-Always observed

1.                      Learns rapidly and easily.
2.                      Uses a great deal of common sense and practical knowledge.
3.                      Reasons things out. Thinks clearly. Recognizes relationships. Comprehends meanings.
4.                      Retains what he has heard or read without much rote drill.
5.                      Knows about many things of which most students are unaware.
6.                      Has a large vocabulary, which he uses easily and accurately.
7.                      Can read books that are one to two years in advance of the rest of the class.
8.                      Performs difficult mental tasks.
9.                      Asks many questions. Has a wide range of interest.
10.                     Does some academic work one to two years in advance of the class
11.                     Is original in his thinking. Uses good but unusual methods.
12.                     Is alert, keenly observant, and responds quickly.
13.                     Expresses himself clearly and accurately either through writing or speaking.
14.                     Is one to two years ahead of his class in mathematics ability.
15.                     Has greater-than-average ability to grasp abstract concepts and see abstract relationships.
16.                     Is willing to spend the time beyond the ordinary assignments or schedule on things that are of interest to him.
17.                     Is not easily discouraged by failure of experiments or projects.
18.                     Wants to know the causes and reasons for things.
19.                     Spends much of his time on special projects of his own, such as making collections, constructing a radio, making a telescope.
20.                     Reads a good deal of scientific literature and finds satisfaction in thinking about and discussing scientific affairs.



# WAHOO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2201 N. Locust St., Wahoo, NE 68066

Fax: (402) 443-4731 • [www.wahooschools.org](http://www.wahooschools.org)

*"Inspiring Our Students to Thrive!"*



Brandon Lavaley  
Superintendent  
402-443-3051

Jarred Royal  
High School Principal  
402-443-4332

Marc Kaminski  
Middle School Principal/AD  
402-443-3101

Ben Kreifels  
Elementary Principal  
402-443-4250

Josh Snyder  
Director of Learning  
402-443-4332

Shelley Maass  
Special Education Director  
402-443-4250

To the parents of \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your son/daughter continues to meet the requirements for participation in Wahoo Public School District's program for high ability learners (HAL). Identification is based on measures that are valid and reliable and that find those students with outstanding performance or potential for outstanding performance from all cultural groups.

The Wahoo Public School District adheres to the definition of high ability learners as stated in Rule 3 of the Nebraska Department of Education.

"Learner with high ability means a student who gives evidence of high performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative or artistic capacity or in special academic fields and who requires accelerated or differentiated curriculum programs in order to develop those capabilities fully."

The label "gifted" in a school setting means that when compared to others his or her age or grade, a child has an advanced capacity to learn and apply what is learned in one or more subject areas, or in the performing or fine arts.

Students with high ability need to have educational experiences that are enriching, challenging, and relevant to encourage their active participation in personal learning. Enriching educational experiences are appropriate for all students. The main focus of our program is differentiation within the regular classroom, particularly in the areas of problem solving, higher order thinking and creativity. In addition, compacting or acceleration of curriculum may occur to address individual needs, abilities and interests.

Additional information concerning the types of services available to the students at the various grade levels is listed in the enclosed flyer.

If you have any questions concerning your son/daughter and the HAL Program, please contact the Elementary School at 402-443-4250.

Sincerely,

Ben Kreifels  
Principal



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Additional information concerning the types of services available to the students at the various grade levels is listed in the enclosed flyer.

If you have any questions concerning your son/daughter and the HAL Program, please contact the Middle School at 402-443-3101.

Sincerely,

Marc Kaminski  
Principal



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Additional information concerning the types of services available to the students at the various grade levels is listed in the enclosed flyer.

If you have any questions concerning your son/daughter and the HAL Program, please contact the Middle School at 402-443-4332.

Sincerely,

Jarred Royal  
Principal



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To the parents/guardians of \_\_\_\_\_ :

Your son/daughter has met the qualifications for identification and participation in the Wahoo Public School District's High Ability Learner (HAL) Program. The identification process has four phases.

**Phase I – Nomination.** Nominations are received from counselors, HAL coordinator, parents, teacher, self or peers. Nominations are submitted to the HAL coordinator.

**Phase II – Screening.** Counselors, building principals, and HAL coordinator facilitate HAL screening. Achievement levels are reviewed and must include reading and math at 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or above on any two subtests on either NWEA-MAP or NeSA.

**Phase III – Identification.** An identification letter is sent to parents/guardians and a notice is placed in the student's file.

**Phase IV – Placement & Participation.** Classroom teachers and building Principals are notified of students' eligibility for HAL participation.

The Wahoo Public School District adheres to the definition of high ability learners as stated in *Rule 3* of the Nebraska Department of Education.

*"Learner with high ability means a student who gives evidence of high performance capability in such areas as intellectual, creative or artistic capacity or in special academic fields, and who requires accelerated or differentiated curriculum programs in order to develop those capabilities fully."*

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All students and especially students with high potential need to have educational experiences that are enriching, challenging, and relevant to encourage their active participation in personal learning. The main focus of our program is differentiation within the regular classroom program, particularly in the areas of thinking skills, creativity, and compacting curriculum in the content areas to provide enrichment and/or acceleration.

Additional information concerning the types of services available to the students at the various grade levels are listed in the enclosed flyer.

If you have any questions concerning your son/daughter and the HAL Program, please contact your Principal, Counselor or the Director of Learning.

Sincerely,

Josh Snyder  
Director of Learning  
402-443-4332

# Memo

The following students in your building have been identified as High Ability Learners (HAL). They meet qualifying criteria in both Reading and Math. They have scored above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile

## Elementary

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Your role in support of our HAL students includes gathering resources and providing differentiated learning opportunities both in and outside of the classroom related to your content area and/or interest of the student. (*i.e. MS: Quarterly activities. HS: US Youth Senate Program; Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Summer Institute*)

*Josh Snyder*  
Director of Learning

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## High School

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Director of Learning