



## Procedures for Parent, Family & Student Engagement and Communication

The Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA) is Colorado's primary law with requirements for the implementation of specific elements and procedures for gifted education programs. ***Procedures for Parent, Family and Student Engagement and Communication*** is one of the thirteen ECEA elements of program design. ECEA Rules for this specific element clearly identify key requirements in regard to communication with parents, families and gifted students. However, other elements within ECEA Rules have additional requirements pertaining to effective communication practices.

The Administrative Unit's (AU's) ***Comprehensive Program Plan (CPP)*** describes procedures and processes to promote stakeholder communication and engagement. Stakeholders are defined as AU and school administrators, teachers, parents and gifted students. Completed plans are transparent documents, accessible to stakeholders on the Colorado Department of Education Office of Gifted Education website.

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/data>

### COMMUNICATION IS DEFINED AS:

- A verbal or written message.
- A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior.
- A technique for expressing ideas effectively.
- A system for transmitting or exchanging information.

### ENGAGEMENT IS DEFINED AS:

- An arrangement to meet or be present.
- Emotional involvement or commitment.
- The act of drawing favorable attention or interest. (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

### ECEA RULES DEFINES ENGAGEMENT AS:

*"Engagement" means the collaboration of families, schools, and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district, and state outcomes." [12.01(14)]*

Communication is the key in building a gifted program that engages educators, students and families throughout the process of identification, development of an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP), monitoring of achievement and affective progress, and goal attainment.

## ECEA Rules

### Indicators

12.02(2)(a)(i) The program plan shall describe how the AU implements parent, family, and student engagement and communication with regard to gifted education programs that include, but are not limited to: how parents are informed about access to identification procedures; ways to educate parents and families about giftedness or parenting gifted students; information about involvement and progress reporting; what programming options are available to match student strengths and challenges; information about concurrent enrollment; how to be involved in college and career planning; primary languages in the AU, and ways parents and families may participate in the school community.

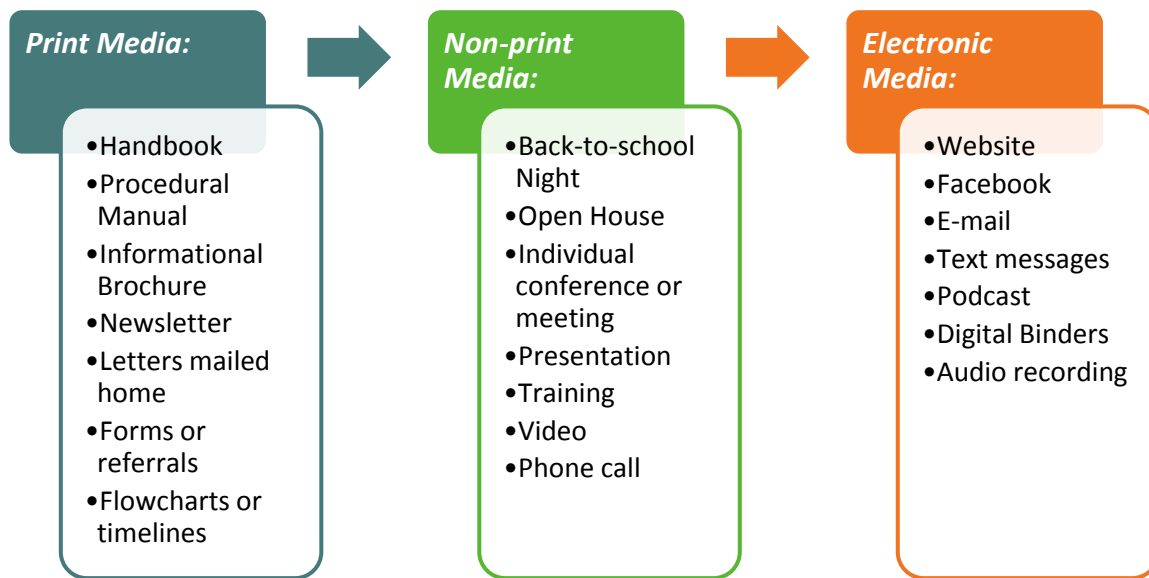
12.02(2)(a)(ii) In multi-district AUs and BOCES, methods of engagement and communication may vary based upon individual district procedures, but each district must have a plan for parent, family, and student communication and engagement.

**KEY INDICATORS FOR ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION INCLUDE:**

- Utilizing a variety of formats to deliver and convey information that may include but are not limited to: print, non-print and electronic media;
- Easily accessible information;
- Opportunities for involvement and engagement in events aligned to gifted programming practices; and
- Communication provided in the primary languages of the AU.

**FORMATS FOR COMMUNICATION**

The AU determines and develops **formats** for communication to stakeholders. ECEA Rules do not specify the types of communication formats an AU shall use; however, providing a variety of methods to relay information leads to effective, open and clear communication. An AU may consider providing information using a combination of these three formats:



**LANGUAGES OF THE AU**

As specified in ECEA Rule, the AU shall provide communication in the primary language(s) of the AU or provide a translator when non-English speaking parents attend conferences or events.



### EASILY ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

Information for parents and families of gifted students should be easily accessible. A component of program evaluation includes asking stakeholders if they know where and how to access information about gifted education. Although having a gifted education website is not a requirement of ECEA Rules, a website is an optimal format for AUs to centralize communication and provide links to a variety of resources. An AU also needs to consider families who do not have access to the Internet or e-mail and how information is disseminated to them. If an AU does have a designated gifted webpage, consider these key elements of an effective site: Appearance, Content and Functionality.

Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text that is easy to read</li> <li>• Simple, uncluttered layouts</li> <li>• Ability to increase text size or read on a mobile device</li> </ul>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to locate</li> <li>• Informative/relevant</li> <li>• Up-to-date</li> </ul>
Functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active links</li> <li>• Updated attachments</li> <li>• Ability to translate into other languages</li> </ul>

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT



Understanding the culture and climate of the AU or district guides the development of opportunities for parents, families and gifted students. When planning events, consider factors such as parent work schedules, commuting distances and whether childcare needs to be provided. Engagement opportunities may be specific to an individual student, like a gifted determination conference or an ALP planning meeting. Gifted personnel may be available at an Open House if parents have specific questions about their gifted child. The district might provide opportunities for parents to engage in a group discussion, such as a *Social Emotional Needs of Gifted (SENG)* group or participate in a book study. An essential component of continued program evaluation includes providing stakeholders the opportunity to be a member of the AU's/district's gifted advisory committee, complete periodic surveys or participate in focus groups or interviews.

Resources within a community may also be accessed to support parents, families and students.



## EXEMPLARS OF ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

The following Promising Partnership Practices align with the [National Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#), adopted in Colorado legislation in 2009. The six standards can guide how an AU’s develops opportunities for parents and student engagement.

Create a welcoming climate	Communicating Effectively	Supporting Student Success	Speaking Up for Every Child	Sharing Power	Collaborating with Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back-to-school Nights</li> <li>• Family Fun Night</li> <li>• Home Visit</li> <li>• Phone calls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual ALP meetings</li> <li>• Personalized e-mails/letters</li> <li>• Workshops/Informational Events</li> <li>• Handbooks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent coffees, book studies, discussion groups</li> <li>• Gifted nights</li> <li>• Gifted progress reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Parenting Gifted Child workshops</li> <li>• Support group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Survey</li> <li>• Parent input for ID and ALP</li> <li>• Advisory Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource Directory</li> <li>• Internship/mentorship</li> <li>• Contests/competitions</li> </ul>

For more information and resources on Promising Partnership Practices, visit the CDE website: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/promising>

## EXEMPLARS OF COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

The Exceptional Children’s Educational Act (ECEA) includes key requirements for communicating with stakeholders. ECEA Rules define the minimum requirements for implementation. As AU’s examine ways to exceed these minimum indicators, exemplars provide opportunities for continued growth and improvement. Consider these guiding questions when developing effective communication protocols.

GUIDING QUESTIONS	EXEMPLARS
<b>How does a parent access information about the AU’s/district’s gifted program?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AU’s Gifted website</li> <li>• CDE Gifted Website-AU’s Comprehensive Program Plan</li> <li>• Parent Handbook (hard copy or online)</li> <li>• Brochures in school’s office/lobby</li> </ul>
<b>How can a parent refer a student for a gifted screening process?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Download a referral form from the website</li> <li>• Request a referral form from the school</li> <li>• Referral forms available in primary languages of AU</li> </ul>
<b>Does the referral process provide an opportunity for a parent to describe observable gifted characteristics?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checklist of gifted characteristics</li> <li>• Describe and provide narrative examples of observed characteristics</li> </ul>
<b>What type of input can a parent provide during the identification process?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview parent via phone or in person</li> <li>• Complete a survey, questionnaire or observation scale</li> <li>• Attend the gifted determination meeting</li> </ul>



GUIDING QUESTIONS	EXEMPLARS
<b>How are parents informed about the team’s gifted determination?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal letter mailed home to the parent</li> <li>• Parent is provided formal notification at gifted determination meeting</li> <li>• Encrypted email sent to the parent (Personal Identifiable Information may not be sent in an unsecure email)</li> </ul>
<b>How are students informed of their gifted identification and what this means?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual or group meeting</li> <li>• Seminar or class on “What it means to be gifted”</li> </ul>
<b>How are parents notified about ALP development and provided an opportunity for input? How are parents provided information throughout the year on progress towards ALP goals?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter mailed home or an e-mail sent to parents on date of ALP development</li> <li>• Parents requested to complete a form to update their child’s portfolio</li> <li>• Parents attend the ALP conference</li> <li>• Parents have access to ALP through a secure student information system</li> <li>• Gifted progress reports sent to parents during reporting times</li> </ul>
<b>How are students notified about the development of their ALP and provided an opportunity for input?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual or group meeting/class/seminar</li> <li>• Completion of interest surveys</li> <li>• Conference with teacher(s)</li> </ul>
<b>How are parents made aware of programming opportunities aligned to their child’s gifted strength area(s) including options for concurrent enrollment?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Handbook</li> <li>• Gifted website</li> <li>• Information presented at ALP conference</li> <li>• Parent night presentation</li> <li>• Gifted education course selection guide</li> <li>• Pamphlets/brochures</li> </ul>
<b>What information is relayed to the parent and student in terms of college and career planning?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALP conference</li> <li>• Individual Career and College Planning (ICAP) development</li> <li>• Informational nights for gifted students/parents</li> <li>• Individual meetings with counselor</li> <li>• College visits</li> </ul>
<b>How are parents and students informed about gifted programming events?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-mails</li> <li>• Webpage announcements</li> <li>• Social media pages</li> <li>• Text messages</li> <li>• Information mailed home</li> <li>• Pamphlets/brochures</li> </ul>
<b>What community resources are available to support gifted students, and how are parents and students made aware of these opportunities?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Links on gifted website</li> <li>• Pamphlets/brochures</li> <li>• Gifted Handbook</li> <li>• Information shared at ALP development</li> </ul>
<b>How does the AU provide opportunities for collaborative budget planning for gifted education funds?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget information shared at advisory meetings, principal meetings or school board meetings</li> </ul>
<b>How do educators in the AU receive information about gifted education and the resources available to support the identification and instruction of gifted students?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development opportunities</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Media libraries</li> <li>• Newsletters</li> <li>• Emails</li> <li>• Handbooks</li> </ul>



**COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITHIN OTHER ECEA ELEMENTS:**

The following ECEA elements include additional key requirements for procedures and practice to promote communication and engagement of all stakeholders.

Element	Rule	Exemplars
<b>Identification</b>	12.02(2)(c)(ii) <b>Referral procedures</b> that seek referrals from a variety of sources, and screening procedures used for conducting identification assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referral form for parent, teacher, coach, community member, peer and the student</li> </ul>
	12.02(2)(c)(viii) A <b>determination letter</b> for parents and school files describing the decision of the review team, and area(s) of giftedness if the student is found to have exceptional abilities; 12.02(2)(c)(Ix) A communication procedure by which parents are made aware of the <b>Identification assessment process</b> for their student, understand the results of the determination, and engage in the development and review of the student's ALP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal identification letter, dated and signed and provide in person to parent, sent via encrypted e-mail or through postal service</li> <li>Flowchart or timeline of the ID process</li> <li>Handbook clearly describing ID and ALP process</li> <li>Resources on “parenting the gifted child”</li> </ul>
	12.02(2)(e)(iv) Communication to parents within 60 school days of start date about how the new district will meet the needs outlined in the student's ALP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeline or procedures evident on the website and/or in parent handbook</li> <li>Brochure provided by enrollment office</li> </ul>
<b>ALP</b>	12.02(2)(g)(i) Notification of <b>ALP development</b> and times in the school year when parents, teachers and the student talk about student academic and affective goal progress;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter or e-mail of invitation sent to parents and student</li> <li>Notification to teachers and other support personnel</li> </ul>
	12.02(2)(g)(iii) A method to develop student awareness and active participation in the ALP process;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual or group meeting with gifted student(s) to review process and solicit input from the student</li> </ul>
	12.02(2)(g)(vi) A system to show evidence of parent engagement and input in ALP development and in the review of progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALP has a place for parent signature, electronic signature or other types of evidence of involvement</li> </ul>
<b>Programming</b>	12.02(2)(h)(i) The program plan shall describe the programming components, options, and strategies that will be implemented by the AU and schools to appropriately address the educational needs of gifted students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programming options outlined on gifted website and/or in Parent and Student Handbook</li> <li>Informational meetings with parents and students</li> </ul>
	12.02(2)(h)(i)(H) ALP development and reviews conducted through the collaborative efforts of the teacher(s), other school personnel (as needed), parents and the student (as appropriate);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALP procedures outline on website and/or in Parent and Student Handbook</li> </ul>
<b>Evaluation and Accountability</b>	12.02(2)(i)(iv) Methods for self-evaluation of the gifted program including a schedule for <b>periodic feedback</b> and review (e.g., review of gifted policy, goals, identification process, programming components, personnel, budget and reporting practices, and the impact of gifted programming on student achievement and progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Periodic programming surveys to collect feedback from parents, students, teachers and administrators</li> <li>Stakeholder focus groups</li> </ul>
	12.02(2)(i)(v) Methods by which parents, educators, and other required persons are informed about the methods described in 12.02(2)(i)(i-iv)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letters or emails to solicit survey feedback</li> <li>Surveys available at gifted events</li> </ul>
<b>Personnel</b>	12.02(2)(0)(i) The program plan shall describe the personnel who provide instruction, counseling, coordination and other programming for gifted students. Personnel shall be knowledgeable in the characteristics, differentiated instructional methods and competencies in the special education of gifted students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development for district/school personnel</li> <li>Teacher Handbook</li> <li>District library and/or Intranet of programming resources</li> </ul>



<b>Budget</b>	12.02(2)(k)(i) The AU shall include in the annual plan a budget for gifted education which reflects the <b>collaborative</b> efforts of the AU and cost of implementing the program elements and the student goals stated in the annual comprehensive program plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solicit input on budget expenditures from gifted advisory group, administrators and teachers</li> <li>• Transparent budgeting process</li> </ul>
<b>Procedures for Disagreements</b>	12.06 Procedures for Disagreements The program plan shall describe procedures for <b>resolving disagreements</b> with parents/guardians, or students in regard to identification, programming, and ALPs. The procedures must be posted for ease of access by stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on website and/or in Parent Handbook</li> </ul>
<b>Early Access</b>	12.08(2) Elements of an <b>Early Access Process</b> An early access process shall include the following elements: 12.08(2)(a) Communication The AU shall communicate with parents, educators and community members as specified in Section 12.02(1)(a) of these Rules. Early access communication is: 12.08(2)(a)(i) Information about the criteria and process for identifying a highly advanced gifted child for whom early access is deemed appropriate, time frames, portfolio referral, deadlines, specific tests and threshold scores used to make final determinations concerning such a student; 12.08(2)(a)(ii) Professional development of educators, or other means to increase the understanding of a highly advanced gifted child and the educational needs of such a student; 12.08(2)(a)(iii) A method for collaborative efforts among preschool, general and gifted education personnel and parents; and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website information and links to necessary referral and portfolio documents</li> <li>• Brochures in elementary schools, community centers and area preschools</li> <li>• Early Access Handbook for Parents</li> <li>• Professional development for school personnel</li> </ul>

## TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

While electronic media provides multiple avenues for one-way communication, it is important to consider how the AU **invites** communication in return. Having information available on a website, emailing electronic newsletters, logging onto a student information system to access grades and educational plans or holding an open-house are all cornerstones of parent, family and student communication. In addition, two-way communication processes provide opportunities for each of these groups to engage in meaningful dialogue, ask questions and provide feedback. For more information about developing systems to solicit feedback from stakeholder groups, see the **Program Evaluation Guidance Document** on the CDE Office of Gifted Education webpage.

### Where can I learn more?

- Visit the Office of Gifted Education webpage: Communication and Engagement: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/engagementcommunication>
- Consult your Gifted Education Regional Consultant (GERC)