



## Administrative Unit

<b>Administrative Unit name:</b> El Paso 8, Fountain - 21040	<b>Region:</b> Pikes Peak	
<b>Name of Gifted Education Director/Coordinator:</b> Laurie Noblitt	<b>Email:</b> lnoblitt@ffc8.org	
<b>Director's mailing address:</b> 10605 Jimmy Camp Rd. Fountain, CO 80817	<b>Phone number:</b> (719) 382-1549	<b>Fax:</b> (719) 382-1-67

**Name of Superintendent:** Dr. Keith Owen

12.02(2) Comprehensive Plan "...The program plan shall be implemented by all constituent schools and districts of the AU. ... The Department shall review all program plans for completeness. An AU's program plan shall be deemed complete if it addresses all elements specified in Section 12.02(2)(a) through 12.02(2)(l) of these Rules"

**Directions:**

Write the administrative unit's description of how it implements each element of the Program Plan and how the AU plans to improve or enhance each element as appropriate. Write how the AU Key requirements of each section of the plan are listed as they are described in the Rules.

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

Effective communication and partnership with students, parents, families and the community is a priority for Fountain-Fort Carson School District and the gifted program. The district has developed several processes to improve this communication with regard to sharing information about gifted programming procedures and options. These processes are implemented at both the district as well as the building level.

Because a large percentage of Fountain-Fort Carson families are affiliated with the military, it is important to ensure easy access to information about gifted programming through the district website. As families transition in and out of the district, the website includes a clear description of the program mission, processes and contact data so that parents have the information necessary to facilitate these transitions. The mission of the gifted program is clearly stated on the main page: ". . . to ensure that each child has equal access to receive an optimum educational experience. Our district recognizes the need to identify students from all backgrounds who demonstrate a potential for exceptional performance. Therefore, we are committed to providing relevant and challenging learning experiences to support the intellectual, behavioral, social, emotional, artistic and creative development of our gifted students." The definition of a gifted student follows the mission statement, and contact information is provided for those who need more information. Identification procedures are clearly described when one accesses the "Identification Processes" link. This information is also included in the GT Handbook which can be downloaded from the website (under the "Parent Resource Documents" link) or provided by the school office upon request. The "Parent



Resource Documents" link includes valuable information about a variety of gifted topics including the following: brochures clarifying gifted program information and ALP development (in English and Spanish), gifted moving information for transitioning families, the acceleration handbook, parent referral forms, and information about district SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted Students) parent group activities. The "Resources and Websites" link provides a quick connection to regional organizations, web resources, and activities and supports for gifted students. Parent Newsletters (which are mailed out each quarter) can also be accessed through the website. All documents can be translated into other languages within one week of request.

Specific school websites also provide information regarding gifted programming. The student handbook can be accessed on each school's website, and the high school provides detailed information regarding course planning and selection as well as college credit and dual enrollment guidelines, honors and college class enrollment processes. The gifted program also has a link on each school's page that takes them directly to the district Gifted Program website.

While the above resources and information can be accessed by any visitor to the district website, staff can access additional information by logging in to the "Staff" tab. The Gifted Handbook for staff, along with referral forms, identification process guides, parent and student interview documents, letter templates, programming resource guides, ALP development supports, acceleration processes, and other training resources, are available to district teachers and support personnel. This provides ready access to district staff at any time. A hard copy version of important forms and guidelines are provided to all gifted education coordinators.

Information and participation opportunities are also provided to stakeholders through more direct (phone calls, emails and face to face) communication. At the high school level, parents are informed and consulted about concurrent enrollment options through enrollment and course selection with counselors. With the implementation of the Naviance system for Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) development, parents have ongoing access to their student's data, goals, and performance information. The gifted education coordinator at the high school follows up with individual parents to engage them in the ALP goal development component of the ICAP. At the elementary and middle school levels, parents receive a parent input form to share their perspective of student strengths and needs as the ALP is developed each year. Parents are also invited and included in the ALP meeting to complete the student plan and ensure needs are appropriately addressed. Parents receive information about their student's progress at October and February conferences, and official progress towards ALP goals is shared at the end of the year through a written report. Another method of communication targets all parents of gifted students at the building level. It is an expectation that each school conduct at least one GT parent event each year to inform parents about gifted processes and programming options at their school. Shared information includes identification processes, available clubs and activities, SENG parent groups, and timelines for progress monitoring of student performance. Parent events also provide an opportunity to gather parent perspective in development of the individual student's ALP and input on overall gifted programming at the district and building level.

The district actively seeks parent feedback regarding the improvement of gifted programming. Every other year, a parent survey is conducted to identify strengths and areas for growth. The most recent survey, completed in September 2016, identified that most parents of gifted students at the elementary level felt informed and involved in their child's program. This perception appears to diminish as students enter the secondary level and is therefore identified as a target for future improvement efforts. Parents also participated on the advisory committee tasked with developing this comprehensive program plan. Parents identified the following strengths in parent engagement and communication: SENG was helpful for parents in understanding and supporting their gifted child; childcare provided during this time was very helpful. GT parent events provide great information but should be scheduled with greater frequency.



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On a more global level, the district accreditation team, comprised of parents from across the district, reviews data and makes recommendations for district improvement efforts. Parents of students identified as gifted currently serve on this team and are able to share their perspective in decision-making efforts. Each building has its own school accreditation team, which provides an opportunity for parents to get involved at the building level, as well.

Targets: Although no improvement targets were indicated in the C-GER, the district has identified the following areas for improvement in procedures for parent, family and student engagement and communication:

- Develop the Gifted Program page on each school's website with school specific information (GT coordinator and administrator contact information, programming options, upcoming events, GT specific blogs for questions/answers, etc.)
- Create GT brochures and flyers communicating information about building specific opportunities and events - send these home with follow-up IC dialer reminders
- Implement a minimum of 2 GT parent events each school year to involve parents in the programming at their student's school. One of these events should include specific transition communication for students moving from elementary to middle and middle to high school.
- Continue to provide SENG parent group opportunities
- Actively seek to involve parents in ALP development - ensuring understanding of the ALP process, purpose, and goals - particularly at the secondary level
- Increase formal communication of ALP goal progress to include February parent teacher conferences; goals will be added/revised as necessary
- Utilize parent surveys at the building level to gain specific feedback for program planning
- Increase proactive communication around universal screening efforts - the district will continue to inform parents of student CogAT results and how this information is utilized

## Definition of "Gifted Student"

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Fountain-Fort Carson defines "gifted children" as those students between the ages of five and twenty-one whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted students include those with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potentials from all socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness: general or specific intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership abilities, visual arts, performing arts, musical, dance or psychomotor abilities. This definition mirrors the state definition with the following exception: the states defines gifted children as "those persons between the ages of four and twenty-one . . ." At this time, the district does not have an early access process. The definition of a gifted student serves as the basis for the implementation of all other program plan elements. It informs the identification process and subsequent programming options and decisions for identified students. It also supports programming determinations for students in the Talent Pool.

## Identification Procedures, Criteria for Determining Exceptional Ability (Giftedness) or Talent Pool, and Identification Portability

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The district identification procedures follow the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) gifted identification process as outlined in the CDE Gifted Education Guidelines. Rules to ensure portability



of identification status for students are applied in all areas of identification. Identification processes are defined in the Gifted Handbook for staff, and multiple staff members have been trained in identification rules and procedures at each building (which have each established a review team for making identification determinations). Students are referred for assessment through multiple sources including universal screening, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), teacher referral, parent referral, student referral, and test data. Upon referral, school teams begin collecting a body of evidence including both quantitative and qualitative data that ensures the examination of multiple pathways for identifying giftedness in accordance with the rules.

Universal screening is implemented at the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels each year. The assessment tool utilized for this screening is the Cognitive Ability Test 7 (CogAT 7). The district has applied for and been awarded the Universal Screening and Highly Qualified Personnel Grant through CDE for the past 3 years. Funds from this grant help support screening efforts at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders complete this screening in September through an online assessment. The screening is administered to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders in November, and the test format is paper-pencil. The test is comprised of a verbal, quantitative and non-verbal battery. The verbal and quantitative batteries typically demonstrate the more crystallized reasoning abilities associated with high academic performance. The non-verbal component of the CogAT demonstrates more fluid reasoning abilities. The combination of all three batteries allows exceptional potential to be revealed for all students, including English language learners and students who may have academic deficits or exceptionalities. This valid and reliable instrument helps empower equal and equitable access to identification for all students, including those from traditionally under-served populations. Following universal screening, schools receive data indicating the performance of each student. Utilizing both age percentile ranking (APR) and grade percentile ranking (GPR), students scoring at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on any battery of the assessment are referred for identification. Students scoring between the 89<sup>th</sup> and 94<sup>th</sup> percentile are referred for Talent Pool identification, intervention, and progress monitoring. Universal screening and continued professional development for staff in understanding the characteristics of gifted students are necessary to ensure appropriate identification for all students. Analysis of the district's demographic data indicates underrepresentation of Hispanic and Black students in the gifted population. Females and English language learners are also underrepresented. This is an area of improvement for the district. Parents, teachers, and students provide additional sources of referral. At any time, parents can refer their student for potential gifted identification by completing the parent referral form and submitting it to the building principal. This form is applicable to all areas of identification (specific academic aptitude, talent, and general intellectual ability). Similarly, teachers can complete the teacher referral form for any student with whom they work. Students can refer both a peer as well as themselves for potential identification in any of the defined areas of giftedness. Upon receipt of the referral, schools must begin collecting the body of evidence for decision-making. Within 30 days of the referral, the school must notify parents of the determination. This notification occurs through a variety of methods including parent phone calls and meetings; additionally, an official determination letter is always sent to parents. The District Identification form is placed in the student's cumulative file along with a signed copy of the ALP (as applicable). The ALP is completed in Alpine, which provides an electronic record of the determination and the synthesis of body of evidence.

The body of evidence for all determinations of giftedness include both qualitative and quantitative components. For each data component, performance at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile and/or an exceptional or distinguished rating is a qualifying indicator. When a student is initially referred, the parent and teacher(s) are asked to complete the norm-referenced observation scale, Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS), to evaluate the gifted behavior characteristics of the student. The parent information is used to inform potential plan development or explore other areas for identification, but it is not currently used as qualifying data. The teacher ratings provide data for



qualification. Student achievement data is also collected using the Student Portfolio function of the Alpine data management system. This allows the quick analysis of student performance and trends over time. Additional evidence for review is dependent upon the area of giftedness under consideration. In recognition of the comprehensive nature of the identification process, the district utilizes an identification form which clearly delineates qualifying data and indicates appropriate next steps for students. This form is shared with parents during eligibility and/or ALP meetings to communicate the identification results and aid in the development of the ALP.

If a student has been referred for identification in a specific academic aptitude area, the body of evidence includes criterion or norm-referenced achievement tests, the SIGS, and/or a performance evaluation such as an advanced score on an expert reviewed portfolio (creative writing), an advanced rating on an expert juried performance (science fair), or top place/ranking on a state or national academic contest (STEM competition). Cognitive test scores are a component of identification; however, if a student does not score at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile, multiple data sources over time indicating consistent advanced performance can be used for identification in specific academic aptitude. It is important to note that not meeting the criteria on a single assessment does not prevent further consideration for identification. Therefore, students referred to the Talent Pool are provided with ongoing interventions and progress monitoring to determine if they meet additional qualifying criteria over time.

The district identification process includes the category of general intellectual ability. Students qualify in this area with a score at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile on one of more batteries of a cognitive test. Upon receiving this qualifying data, the school identification team collects and reviews the body of evidence (as described above), and determines that there are no other qualifying criteria. The review team identifies the students as gifted in general or specific intellectual ability, and the learning profile obtained from the body of evidence is used to develop the student's ALP. This identification supports targeted interventions for students who may be impacted by a variety of challenges such as frequent mobility, second language learners, and students with academic deficits and/or disabilities.

As a district serving a high percentage of students from military families, it is vital that we have a consistent process for transferring the identifying body of evidence from district to district with clarity. When a student is identified as gifted in Fountain-Fort Carson District, the District ID form and the signed ALP are placed in the cumulative record file. When a student transfers to a new district the records are sent to the receiving district upon receipt of a signed request form. When a student with an ALP enrolls in FFC8, the ALP is reviewed within 45 days of enrollment to determine if it meets the portability requirements of Colorado. If it does, we accept the ALP; if it does not, the student is referred for review by the identification team to determine what assessments may need to be completed. If the transferred body of evidence appears incomplete, the school contacts the sending district as well as the student's parents to request additional information. The Military Interstate Compact is followed for all students involved in military transfers. This requires that gifted programming be provided to previously identified students until eligibility has been determined. Communication regarding the eligibility determination of transferring students is shared with parents within 60 days of enrollment.

The district is currently developing identification processes for all areas of giftedness, including creative or productive thinking, leadership, and specific talent aptitudes (visual arts, performing arts, music, dance and psychomotor). These improvement efforts are defined in the Improvement Timeline created following the C-GER process in 2015. Currently, the district has developed and implemented the identification process for visual art - culminating in the identification of 3 students in May 2016. During the fall of 2016, the district completed and began implementing the identification process for music. This process should be completed in the spring of 2017. Training has been acquired in the administration of the Torrance Test of Creativity, and this assessment has been administered to students referred for identification in visual art as well as creativity. The



district is currently developing the identification process for students in leadership, creative or productive thinking, dance, performing arts, and psychomotor. These processes should be completed and ready for implementation by December 2016. Additional improvement efforts and timelines for identification of students in the specific talent aptitudes are described below.

Target: 2015 C-GER review indicated that the district was out of compliance in the area of identification procedures. Two improvement goals were indicated:

- Provide evidence that identification procedures for the defined talent areas are completed and implemented
- Apply measures and processes to increase identification in underrepresented groups

The district is taking the following strategic actions to address these goals -

-Identification procedures for the defined talent areas:

- Define the process for identification of gifted in dance and begin implementation - October 2016
- Define the process for identification of gifted in leadership, performing arts and creative or productive thinking - December 2016
- Complete implementation of identification process in music, dance, and creativity- May 2016
- Educate all district staff and parents on the identification process for talent areas - September 2017

-Implement measures and processes to increase identification in underrepresented groups

- Continue universal screening at 2nd, 5th and 8th grade levels - Ongoing
  - Define identification in General Intellectual Ability for students who have a qualifying cognitive score but no other body of evidence indicating gifted performance; provide follow-up training for district staff - Ongoing
  - Continue to provide professional development to district staff (including special education and ELD teachers) in the characteristics of gifted students, particularly those from underrepresented groups - students of poverty, English language learners, twice exceptional students, etc. - Ongoing
- Additionally, the Advisory Committee recommends the district seek to improve the following components of identification:
- Increase identification in the specific academic areas of social studies, science and world language
  - Increase the utilization of teacher referrals
  - Ensure that every building has a comprehensive identification team working together to make eligibility determinations
  - Ensure that parents understand the identification processes utilized for their child
  - Ensure a consistent process is implemented for transferring students with previous identification to quickly address programming needs and review eligibility under Colorado criteria

## Advanced Learning Plan Content, Procedures and Responsibilities

An Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) is developed for every gifted student in Fountain-Fort Carson according to the student's strength area(s), interests, and instructional and affective needs. The ALP is initially developed upon identification of giftedness, and it is then updated every fall to reflect programming plans based upon *current* student interests, strengths, needs and goals. This student profile is developed each year in the Student Interests and Goals sections of the ALP. Student and parent input and involvement in ALP development has been a specific area of focus for fall 2016. The district has provided training for teachers at both the building and district level in effective ALP development. This training has emphasized the use of student interest inventories, parent input documents, and the importance of collaborative ALP development. Another targeted



area of improvement has been the alignment of standards-based goals with student strengths and interests. Multiple representatives from every school in the district attended a full-day training on standards-aligned goals in September 2016. Following this training, the gifted education team (coordinators and director) created resource documents and supports to guide teachers in the process. The result of these efforts is a dramatic increase in relevant and meaningful standards-aligned ALP goals, increased student participation and choice in ALP development, and teachers who feel empowered to more effectively address the learning needs of their students. A variety of data sources inform student goals. Sources include achievement and growth data from state and district assessment, curriculum-based assessments, student interview and interest inventories, and parent input.

Relevant affective goals addressing personal, social, communication, and leadership competencies are also included in all ALPs. During training, teachers reviewed the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) programming standards to better understand how to target these goals and effectively address student affective needs. Student self-assessment helps determine if more strategic intervention and supports, such as small group or one-on-one counseling, is necessary. At the secondary level, the ALP is considered in planning for post-secondary readiness. Students utilize the Naviance system to target more long-term goals for post-secondary options that they can begin to explore during the school year. At the high school level, the ALP is blended into the Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP). This comprehensive system incorporates college and career readiness planning, goals in areas of strength and/or interest, and affective goals/supports with student interest inventories, college research platforms and course planning tools to ensure students' needs are appropriately addressed through more diverse content option such as internships, honors programs, and advanced classes.

ALP goals are developed through a SMART goal process (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely). The interventions and strategies provided to support goal attainment are clearly described including the content and activities, structures for programming, differentiation strategies, and extended/expanded learning opportunities planned to address the students' goals. Clear success criteria are included to determine the level of goal attainment. Goals are written and aligned with tiered classroom instruction and supplemental programming opportunities.

The ALP includes a thorough body of evidence detailing the criteria used for student identification. This section of the plan is not updated unless identification is changing as a new area is added. Parent perspective and input are also incorporated into the ALP each year (when available). Parent input can be added through completion of parent feedback forms and/or parent participation in the ALP meeting.

Targets: No improvement targets were indicated in the C-GER review; however, the Advisory Committee has identified several areas for improvement in ALP Content:

- Ensuring the creation of meaningful affective goals for all students
- Ensuring all goals are individualized, relevant and include specific programming aligned to standards
- Guidance and counseling sections of the ALP will be updated each year based upon student and parent interview information
- Only current and relevant data will be included in the ALP
- All Synthesis of Body of Evidence sections will be reviewed to ensure they are in alignment with portability requirements and include all necessary information for previously identified students. If inadequate information is available, the statement "identified utilizing local identification criteria" will be added for clarity

As previously stated, ALPs are developed for identified students each fall. They are collaboratively created, and participants in plan development may include classroom/content area teachers, related arts teachers, gifted education coordinators/teachers, students, parents, counselors, school



psychologists, and administrators. Parents, teachers and students are notified about ALP development and provided with opportunities to contribute input. Notification is sent through a variety of methods: emails, letters, phone calls, GT Parent Night flyers, etc. Teachers are notified when a student has been referred for identification and when an ALP is being developed so that they can contribute to the plan development. Gifted education coordinators/teachers, who have received more comprehensive training in plan development, provide support to teachers and counselors as they complete the ALP. The coordinators are not, however, the "sole custodian" of the ALP. Indeed, teachers write the ALP goal(s), provide the specified instruction, and monitor progress towards goal attainment. The gifted education coordinator simply supports this process. Students also help develop their ALP; they contribute information about interests and goals that are included in all ALPs. In many schools, this involvement includes students selecting the goal(s) that they will be working towards throughout the year. The district seeks to consistently increase student involvement in ALP development and process as the gifted program continues to grow. Parents have formally received progress updates towards ALP goals only at the end of the school year. Beginning in fall 2016, parents will receive progress updates at February parent teacher conferences as well as at the end of the school year. This will ensure that interventions are appropriately addressing student needs, and if not, can be adjusted to further support growth. As previously described, ALPs are created in the Alpine Achievement data warehouse system. A hard copy of the document is printed and signed by those participating in the ALP meeting, including the parent (and student if applicable). This signed document is added to the cumulative record file. As a student transfers between grades/levels, both the electronic records and the cumulative record file is transferred with them. This ensures new teachers have access to previous goals, data, and intervention information. GT Coordinators from each building are also available to answer questions and provide additional information to the receiving school team. Because a new plan is developed each year, programming options and goals evolve to appropriately address current strengths, needs, and interests. These changes are reflected in the new ALP each year.

An important component of the ALP process is review and refinement of plan development. Each year, the gifted education director randomly audits plans from every building and scores them utilizing a rubric to identify areas of strengths and need. This feedback is summarized and shared with building administrators and gifted education coordinators to be used in future professional development planning and individual follow-up with teachers.

Targets: No improvement targets were identified through the C-GER review; however, the Advisory Committee has identified several areas for continued improvement in ALP Procedures:

- Students must be engaged in developing goals at every level
- Continue to refine the integration of the ALP into the ICAP through Naviance
- Update and communicate progress monitoring of ALP goals throughout the year (with February conferences and end of year communication a minimum standard)
- Continue training staff on gifted identification, classification and ALP development

## Programming

One of the major improvement strategies of the district's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) is to improve differentiation of instruction for students, and the context of the goal specifically identifies gifted students as one of the target subgroups. This goal is also addressed in the district's professional development plan, the gifted budget, and PLC discussions in each building at each grade level. Differentiation is also a component of the Teaching and Learning Framework, a standards-based instructional model, which provides the focus for all district work. The framework emphasizes the importance of utilizing formative assessment data to guide instructional decision-making and thereby provide greater differentiation of instruction for advanced students who may quickly master the concepts and skills being taught within the classroom.



Specific programming for gifted students is identified in the ALP and is selected based upon student strengths, areas of need, and interests. A variety of data sources inform student goals; these sources include performance data, student interview and/or survey, and parent input. Affective goals are written to address specific student needs. Programming for these goals may include the school counselor, the school psychologist, the gifted coordinator/teacher, and the classroom teacher. Every ALP includes an affective goal that either provides support for a need or an opportunity to acquire additional social-emotional and/or early college and career readiness learning. Because the ALP represents a comprehensive perspective of student strengths and needs, it is vital that the plan be developed as a collaborative effort between those providing the specific instruction and support. Grade level/content area teachers, related arts teachers, school counselors, school psychologists, gifted education coordinators/teachers, and administrators work together through varying processes to ensure the ALP targets student strengths, interests, and needs. Parents participate in providing input through surveys, interviews, and involvement at ALP meetings. As students transition from one grade level to another, programming needs/options evolve, and the appropriate changes are reflected in the ALP which transitions with them.

As indicated in the Administrative Unit Programming Details document, the district provides a variety of programming options for the varied areas of giftedness at different levels of schooling (elementary, middle, and high school). At all levels, gifted programming is provided within the following structures: classroom with flexible grouping, cluster grouping, and magnet classrooms. Teachers differentiate instruction by compacting the curriculum, targeting critical thinking skill development, content extension activities, and subject-based acceleration (as appropriate). Pre-assessment of skills supports this differentiation, and students have opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge through assessment alternatives and varied choices for product demonstration and evidence of learning. Direct instruction in the art areas (music, art, and drama) is provided and/or available at all levels. Affective guidance emphasizes personal competence (self-awareness, efficacy, and advocacy), social competence, and leadership.

At the elementary level, teachers utilize supplemental curriculums to provide standards-based instruction when students need extension of the grade level materials. These curriculums integrate additional opportunities for problem-solving and inquiry-based learning. Students have opportunities to explore their interests through extended learning opportunities, and content extensions frequently apply academic standards within and across disciplines. In the talent areas, programming options include participation in the following: direct instruction in art and music, opportunities to participate in drama (through the music class), competitions (art, music, robotics), select choir, and art clubs. Student Council and mentorship roles strengthen the leadership skills of elementary students, and career and college planning is introduced as students learn the skills of time management, study skills, and exploration of future goals and aspirations. Students also receive guidance and support through small group instruction and/or lunch groups in understanding the emotional intensities that can be a factor of giftedness.

Middle school programming includes the options described above, but subject-based acceleration occurs through specific course placement (i.e. advanced and honors classes). The Naviance system for developing the Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) is also introduced to students in middle school. This tool provides them the opportunity to complete more in-depth interest inventories as they further develop their areas of focus. Programming options in the talent areas also include band, honor band, ensemble competitions, and theater classes. Additional guidance is provided through small group instruction with counselors and gifted education teachers in effective communication and relationship skills which represent a major challenge of young adolescence.

As students enter high school, programming options further expand to include online courses, Advanced Placement (AP)/Pre-AP courses, and concurrent enrollment opportunities. Participation in debate and JROTC offers high school students the opportunity to experience leadership at a deeper level, and AP courses are available in music. College and career planning has great emphasis in high



school. Internships empower students to experience potential career options, and independent study courses allow students to take their research to much greater depths. Students continue to utilize the Naviance system as they develop their ICAP, and they begin to explore potential colleges, learning more about the specific application processes for seeking acceptance to each. SAT assessment programs are implemented at 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, and this information is integrated into the ICAP. To streamline instructional programming for gifted high school students, the ALP is integrated into the ICAP in high school. This system of information is then inclusive of student interests, goals, strengths, performance, and planning needs. Affective needs are also addressed through the ICAP, and school counselors and the gifted education teacher work with students to provide additional support and guidance (through small groups, lunch groups, and one-on-one support) in developing personal and social competence. More information about programming options at the high school level can be found in the Fountain-Fort Carson High School Handbook located on their website.

In 2014, the district received a STEM grant that has provided significant resources and learning opportunities in target schools. Project Lead the Way has become an integral component of high school STEM instruction and significantly impacted the provision of quality professional development for teachers. Elementary, middle and high school educators work to align and combine their instructional efforts as demonstrated in the annual district STEM competition each spring, an activity which includes all schools (grant and non-grant recipients) in exercising creative problem-solving using scientific and mathematical principles. To support non-grant recipient schools' access to STEM curricular materials and training, the district has utilized gifted funds to purchase Engineering is Elementary materials, sponsored the inclusion of middle school students at summer STEM camp, and allowed schools to request additional funds for the school to purchase robotics materials. These resources are utilized both during the school day and through popular after-school extension activities/clubs.

The district also provides gifted programming opportunities beyond the typical school day. After school clubs and activities are consistently implemented across the district. These clubs include many areas of student interest, such as book club, math club, STEM, robotics, technology, chess, art, creative writing, and drama to name a few. The after school activities are supported with gifted funds, and they provide additional and diverse learning opportunities for students. Gifted and advanced courses have also been added to the summer school program. At the elementary level, students enroll in advanced language arts, advanced math, and power science - all courses which integrate project-based learning opportunities for students to extend these areas of interest. STEM camp is provided for target elementary schools (STEM Grant recipients) and secondary schools. Students have the opportunity to enroll in this two week course that integrates inquiry-based learning opportunities across the content areas of science, technology, engineering, and math. In some cases, the programming options described above are not adequate to address the learning needs of gifted students; students may demonstrate underachievement or inadequate growth/progress. In these situations, the teacher(s) may refer the student to the building Problem-Solving Team for further review and intervention. These interventions are then reflected in the student's ALP, and progress is monitored for effectiveness of intervention. The district has also established a process to determine if grade-level acceleration is an appropriate intervention. The acceleration procedure is provided on the district website (in the Parent Resource Documents on the Gifted Program page, and in the Gifted Handbook for staff). This process has been implemented multiple times over the past three years, and to date, grade-level acceleration has been identified as an appropriate intervention for one student.

Targets: Gifted programming is growing and expanding in the district; however, areas for improvement have also been identified and are currently being implemented. Although no improvement targets were indicated in the C-GER, the district seeks to further develop programming through the following efforts:



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- Increased emphasis on student and parent involvement in ALP development is a focus of current professional development. Through these efforts, student interests, strengths, and choice are more comprehensively being addressed and targeted.
  - Student self-advocacy skills are more effectively addressed at all levels through ongoing guidance and support with teachers, counselors, and administrators.
  - Professional development for teachers to further acquire instructional strategies (both academic and social-emotional) to better differentiate instruction is addressed in both the district and gifted program staff development plans. Increasing the instructional repertoire of staff is vital to meeting the learning needs of gifted students. Professional development will be provided at both the district and building levels to address these needs.
  - As students transition from elementary to middle and middle to high, the district will ensure that parents and students have opportunities to learn about the gifted programming options in the new school each spring. A point of contact for course selection and overall support will also be established at this time.
  - Programming best practices and necessary components (both academic and affective) will be further defined and communicated with all schools to ensure consistency and alignment of instruction across the buildings.

## Evaluation and Accountability Procedures

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Gifted student performance data is embedded in Fountain-Fort Carson's Unified Improvement Plan (UIP), and gifted education assurances are reported on the UIP gifted education addendum. Multiple data sources provide ongoing progress monitoring of student growth. These data sources include Scantron Performance series, district common assessments for English Language Arts (ELA), grading rubrics, portfolios, curriculum-based measurements/formative assessments, class grades, and state assessments (PARCC and CMAS). This data is analyzed at both the district and building levels to determine annual performance targets, develop action plans to meet these targets, and define a timeline by which to report progress towards the targets. Performance data for gifted students is disaggregated for the following sub-groups: students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, gender, ethnicity, students identified as English language learners, and students identified as twice-exceptional.

Scantron Series assessments for reading and math are administered at the beginning, middle and end of year to provide analysis of student achievement and growth throughout the year. The district ELA assessment is given in the fall and spring to provide feedback to both students and teachers regarding student progress and instructional needs in reading and writing. Portfolios of student work are collected throughout the year to demonstrate student conceptual understanding and application of learning (this is particularly evident in the areas of writing and visual arts). Rubrics are used throughout the year to evaluate student acquisition of learning targets in the areas of mathematics, ELA, social studies, science, and visual arts.

As part of an effective teaching and learning cycle, teachers in Fountain-Fort Carson utilize the Colorado Academic Standards to identify clear learning targets and set measurable success criteria. Instruction is collaboratively planned, and formative assessment is incorporated throughout the instructional process to determine student acquisition of the target and potential differentiation needs. These formative assessments are frequently developed collaboratively and then analyzed by grade level/content level teams to evaluate student learning and determine future instruction. The continual growth of all students is the bar by which success is measured. Affective growth for gifted students is also a priority. This is measured and monitored through student surveys and the individual student's affective goal in the Advanced Learning Plan and/or Individual Career and Academic Plan.



Student performance and growth results are reported to stakeholders throughout the year. Parents receive a report card at the end of each quarter, and regular progress reports are sent home at least every 4 weeks. Following state assessment, parents receive the state parent report detailing their student's performance (and growth when applicable). The Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) is developed in the fall, and progress towards ALP goals is officially reported at the end of the school year. Each school has an Accreditation Committee which reviews the achievement and growth data for students throughout the school year; this includes disaggregated data indicating the performance of gifted students (when applicable). The District Accreditation Committee also reviews gifted student performance data each year.

At the secondary level, additional resources guide the evaluation and accountability component. Many gifted students participate in Advanced Placement (AP) courses which culminate in the completion of the AP exam. These results provide another source of data analysis demonstrating student achievement and learning. Concurrent enrollment opportunities are also provided to secondary students, and student grades and course completion are analyzed to determine achievement. The Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) provides each individual student with an evaluation of performance and goal-setting tasks to plan future learning. Fountain-Fort Carson utilizes the Naviance system to provide all secondary students with this opportunity to monitor their learning and set their own learning targets, and the Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) is incorporated into this comprehensive student plan at the high school level.

Fountain-Fort Carson continually evaluates the gifted program and seeks opportunities for improvement. Each school in the district has a Gifted Coordinator as well as an administrator who is assigned to supervise program implementation in the building. This group meets throughout the year to review program elements, receive and provide professional development, and network to increase programming opportunities and knowledge across the district. In 2015, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) completed the Colorado Gifted Education Review (C-GER) for the district. Through this process, the district completed a thorough program Self-Evaluation which, in combination with the C-GER report, has provided a guide for program improvement efforts. In September of 2016, each building completed another self-evaluation to determine strengths and areas for improvement. The district also surveyed parents and students to gain stakeholder feedback and perspective. This information was reviewed by the advisory committee developing the Gifted Program Plan (advisory committee included parents, teachers, gifted coordinators, and building/district administrators). The findings of this committee, in conjunction with analysis of student performance, have been utilized to identify the following next step.

Target: Although no improvement targets were indicated in the C-GER, the district seeks to improve our gifted program through the following next steps:

- Review of 2015-2016 state assessment data indicate that gifted students in Fountain-Fort Carson (FFC8) performed slightly lower than gifted students in the state in both ELA and Math. While 31% of gifted students scored in the "Exceeded" category on the ELA assessment at the state level, 28% of gifted students in FFC8 scored in the "Exceeded" category. Similarly, at the state level, 17% of gifted students "Exceeded" expectations in Math while only 12% of FFC8 gifted student "Exceeded." Additional areas for monitoring include students identified as receiving free and reduced lunch and potential gender gaps in performance. This data, in combination with district and grade level assessment, will be analyzed at each building to develop specific strategies for improving performance of all gifted students as well as any noted achievement gaps in sub-group performance.
- The district will develop a consistent and comprehensive process to measure student affective growth. Strategies include developing a beginning and end of year student survey to guide social-emotional programming and provide a means for comparing student rating of social-emotional status with beginning of year data. Furthermore, ensuring the consistent and ongoing involvement of school counselors and/or school psychologists is necessary to meet the social-emotional needs of gifted students. Training will continue to be provided to these staff members.



- Program evaluation tools and processes will continue to be refined and implemented to ensure the growth of gifted programming across the district.

## Personnel

The district employs a 0.3 FTE district Director of Gifted Programming who is endorsed in gifted education to administer and monitor the implementation of the district's gifted program. Furthermore, the district Student Achievement Department actively supports gifted programming. In fact, two members of the Student Achievement team (Instruction and Assessment Specialists) have their endorsement in gifted education and actively participate on the Gifted Education team. Across the district, each building has a gifted education coordinator who receives a stipend to support the implementation of gifted programming in their building. Three of these coordinators have an endorsement in gifted education and/or are working towards a master's degree in gifted education. Additionally, an administrator in each building is assigned with oversight of gifted programming for the school. At the secondary level, the position of a gifted education teacher/coordinator has been added as a full-time FTE at Fountain-Fort Carson High School and Fountain Middle School. A 0.5 FTE has been assigned to Carson Middle School. This position requires endorsement or advanced degree in gifted education, and all personnel hired for these positions have their endorsement in gifted education. The district collaborates with area universities to share information about advanced degree programs which contribute to the development of qualified personnel, and one hundred percent of core academic teachers are highly qualified to teach in their content areas. No paraprofessionals are employed to support gifted programming.

Gifted education coordinators meet approximately once a month to collaboratively develop and implement the district's gifted program. Professional development is provided for coordinators throughout the year, and they take this learning/resources back to their buildings to share with staff. Additionally, coordinators share feedback and observation regarding professional development needs in their building. This information is utilized to develop and implement district level training opportunities. Recent topics of these trainings are as follows: characteristics of gifted students, differentiation strategies, meeting the social-emotional needs of gifted students, standards-aligned ALPs, Junior Great Books and inquiry-based learning opportunities, STEM, etc. Professional development is provided in the evenings, during the summer and occasionally during the school day. Continuing education credits are provided for completing training, and substitute coverage is provided as necessary. Gifted education coordinators, classroom teachers, school counselors, and administrators are all involved in these learning opportunities. All professional development is provided in alignment with the gifted program plan and the UIP.

As teachers attend professional development to refine their skills in differentiation strategies, inquiry-based learning, student facilitated learning, etc., they more effectively meet the needs of their students. Administrators receive regular reports indicating the training in which their staff has participated; this allows administrators to provide targeted feedback to teachers regarding implementation of strategies supporting gifted students. The Gifted Handbook, which is provided on the district website, serves as a compilation of information and resources and also supports gifted education programming.

Target: Although no improvement targets were indicated in the C-GER, the district seeks to further develop personnel through the following efforts:

- Increase the number of teachers endorsed in gifted education and/or completing advanced degrees in gifted education. All correspondence from universities and colleges with regard to gifted education coursework is forwarded to gifted coordinators for dissemination in their school.
- Continue to provide professional development for teachers in differentiation strategies and understanding the characteristics of gifted students



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- Provide ongoing opportunities for gifted coordinators to collaborate with classroom teachers for planning and lesson development

## Budget

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Fountain-Fort Carson School District submits an annual budget for gifted education. The district has also applied for and been awarded the Universal Screening and Highly Qualified Personnel Grant for the past three years. Additionally, over the past three years, the district has contributed approximately 35% of the total budget. These state and contributing district funds are used to support the program plan in the following ways:

- .3 FTE for gifted education director
- Universal screening utilizing the Cognitive Abilities Test 7 (CogAT 7) at three grade levels: 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>
- Stipends for gifted education coordinators in each school
- .5-1.0 FTE for gifted education teachers at the secondary level
- Professional development for teachers - differentiation strategies, characteristics of gifted students, meeting the social-emotional needs of gifted students, inquiry-based learning strategies, STEM, etc.
- Substitute coverage for teachers to attend gifted education professional development and/or attend ALP meetings
- After school enrichment activities - Robotics Clubs, Math Club, STEM Club, Book Club, etc.
- Extension and enrichment activities during the school day for gifted students
- Field trips
- Curriculum resources for gifted programming
- Supplies and materials to support gifted programming
- Gifted program parent involvement activities and events

The gifted program budget reflects the needs, goals and targets of the program plan which operate in alignment with the district UIP. Gifted funds are allocated to each school in the district based upon enrollment. The district budget is shared with stakeholders during advisory committee meetings. Schools have the discretion to allocate building gifted funds based upon their individual analysis of gifted programming needs. The district Director of Gifted Programming oversees budget expenditures to ensure they are in accordance with state rules.

## Reports

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Fountain-Fort Carson School District complies with all aspects of reporting requirements in rule 12.03. The current annual plan, through the UIP Gifted Addendum, is on file at the Department of Education. The district complies with the rules and requirements of accreditation with regard to gifted student achievement, identification of disparities in the data, instructional goals, and growth and reporting. The district completes and submits all budget proposals, revisions, and expenditure reports to the Department of Education in a timely manner. Accurate information is reported annually through the data pipeline regarding the number of identified students by grade, gender, ethnicity, free and reduced lunch status, and twice exceptionality.

Target: Although no improvement targets were indicated in the C-GER, the district seeks to further develop the program through the following efforts:

- The district is currently working to align student gifted identification with the specific academic aptitude, specific talent aptitude, or general intellectual ability terminology utilized in state rule. This includes updating both the Advanced Learning Plan terminology as well as student



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coding in the electronic database system Infinite Campus. This process has been initiated in all schools and will be complete no later than September 2017.

## Record Keeping

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As described in the Advanced Learning Plan Content section, every identified gifted student has an ALP which is reviewed and rewritten each year. The ALP is developed using the electronic database Alpine Achievement System. This system provides an electronic record of all Advanced Learning Plans created over the years, and it allows educators easy access to review previous learning goals and interests of current students. The ALP developed in the Alpine Achievement System integrates ongoing student achievement and growth information using the data warehouse component of the system. This empowers educators to understand the student's performance trends/growth over time and thereby develop more strategic goals and interventions to maximize this growth. The ALP is shared with parents and a signed hard copy of the plan is then added to the student's cumulative education record. A copy of the ALP is provided to parents following the ALP meeting. The ALP is considered a formal educational plan, and as such, it is maintained following all guidelines of confidentiality. ALPs are never emailed to parents, and they are maintained in a secure location (printed documents are kept in a locked cabinet).

As students transition from school to school within the district, the electronic file is transferred to the receiving school and the cumulative records follow. As students leave the district, the cumulative file is sent to the receiving district upon parent request/release. Electronic records are maintained internally in accordance with all guidelines for educational records. The cumulative file (including ALP records, identification paperwork, and referral information) for students who graduate from the district and/or leave the district with no follow-up request for records is maintained according to guidelines for educational records and then destroyed (shredded) after the required time period.

An inventory of resources purchased with gifted education funds is maintained and monitored throughout the year. These resources include gifted education curriculum resources, teacher materials, and student materials.

## Procedures for Disagreements

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The district has identified procedures for resolving disagreements with parents/guardians, students or teachers with regard to identification, programming and ALPs. Information detailing this procedure is available in the GT Parent Handbook and in the Parent Resource Documents located on the Gifted Programming page(s) of the district website. The parent handbook details the Appeals Process for an identification decision and for programming appeals. The Appeals Process is also included in the Gifted Handbook for staff.

The appeals process is as follows:

A parent, student or teacher has the right to appeal the identification recommendation made by the LIGHTS Identification Team. To initiate an appeal process the appellant should contact the building principal and complete the necessary appeal forms. Appeal documents will include a completed Appeal Request Form and any other additional assessment information or student performance examples that were not part of the original screening process. This information should be returned to the building principal. Once the documents have been received by the school, the LIGHTS Identification Team will reconvene to review the new documents. The appellant will be a part of this review screening and have the opportunity to further explain the reasons for the appeal and answer any questions the committee may have. The district GT Coordinator may be invited to attend this meeting at the school or parent's request. The team will consider the new information and render a



decision. If the appellant is still not in agreement with the recommendation, he / she will contact the district GT Coordinator to review the identification process. It is the goal of FFC8 to meet the needs of all students and provide every student with a challenging and enriching learning experience. The goal of the appeal conference is to ensure the student's needs have been accurately assessed and instructional strategies are implemented to meet the student's unique needs. A student may be reevaluated for gifted identification on an annual basis when new assessment data become available. Methods to express concerns, issues, and disagreements with programming (including ALP development, accommodations, etc.):

- Yearly ALP meeting in the fall (Teacher, GT Coordinator, Parents, Students, Building Administrator, and Counselors)
- Parent Teacher Conferences (October and February)
- Parent/Teacher request of Additional ALP meeting
- Phone call and/or email to classroom teacher, building GT Coordinator, and building principal
- Phone call and/or email to District GT Coordinator

Target: Although no improvement targets were indicated in the C-GER, the district seeks to further develop the program through the following efforts:

- Parents will receive a notice of parental rights during the initial ALP meeting (this includes the GT Parent Handbook, the ALP brochure, and the Gifted Program Brochure)

## Monitoring

The district complies with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding the gifted program plan, identification and special education services for gifted students. The district definition of a gifted student is in alignment with the state definition. Following identification, student programming is provided in accordance with this definition. The district monitors the annual and comprehensive program plan through the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP). The district accreditation team provides guidance and feedback for the district UIP and budget priorities. Strategic actions defined in the UIP are monitored and evaluated throughout the year. Building teams, in collaboration with the District's Gifted Coordinator, monitor annual enrollment and performance reports to ensure that gifted identification appropriately includes underrepresented and diverse populations of students and that all students identified as gifted are demonstrating reasonable growth and achievement towards academic goals.

The district completed a thorough Self-Evaluation process for the 2015 C-GER and has taken action to correct all areas identified as non-compliant.

Targets: The C-GER process identified the following area as non-compliant: Identification

- Identification procedures for the defined talent areas must be completed and implemented
- Measures and processes to increase identification in underrepresented groups must be applied

Steps defined in the Improvement Timeline are as follows:

1) The district will research identification procedures in specific talent areas. Through this research, clear processes for identification will be developed and implemented so that students can be referred and identified in visual arts, music, dance, performing arts, creativity, leadership and psychomotor. Resources will be allocated to purchase assessment materials, reserve locations for performance evaluations, and access necessary training for staff.

2) Universal screening utilizing the Cognitive Abilities Test 7 will continue for 2nd, 5th and 8th grades. The district will define identification in General Intellectual Ability for students who have a qualifying cognitive score but no other body of evidence indicating gifted performance; follow-up training will be provided for district staff. The district will continue to provide professional development for staff in the characteristics of gifted students, particularly those from



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underrepresented groups - students of poverty, English language learners, twice exceptional students, etc.