

Program Evaluation and Accountability

The Exceptional Children’s Educational Act (ECEA) details Colorado law regarding the implementation of elements and procedures for gifted education. The State Board of Education is responsible for promulgating rules that local districts use to follow Colorado education laws. Administrative Units (AUs) oversee and provide educational services to gifted students and professional development opportunities for educators. AU is defined as a school district, a board of cooperative services (BOCES), or the state Charter School institute. ECEA Rules guide AUs in developing provisions for the implementation of the gifted program plan.

The AU’s Comprehensive Program Plan (CPP) is a concisely written description of the policies, procedures and methods by which an AU identifies and programs for gifted education. The elements addressed in a CPP are based upon ECEA statute and criteria established by Rules and any criteria for accreditation (22-20-104.5).

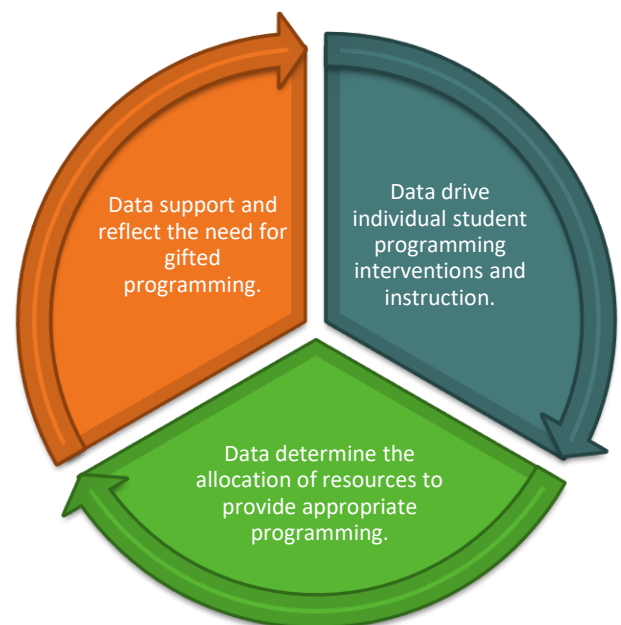
ECEA Rules provide the foundation so quality programming can occur. Rules define key requirements for implementation of the thirteen program **elements**. These elements include: Communication and Engagement, Definition, Identification, Advanced Learning Plan, Programming, Evaluation and Accountability, Personnel, Budget, Reports, Record Keeping, Procedures for Disagreements, and Monitoring and Early Access for those AUs who have an approved plan on file with the Colorado Department of Education.

Program **evaluation** is a systemic, comprehensive appraisal of the gifted education program plan and drives future decision making to ensure continuous improvement. Additionally, program evaluation supports **accountability**, which includes the gathering, analyzing and reporting of data for the purpose of identifying strengths, determining improvement areas and complying with state accreditation and monitoring requirements. ECEA Rules contain a specific section defining key requirements for **Evaluation and Accountability**. However, it is noted that all elements within the Rules contain indicators that support an AU’s universal program plan evaluation. Data collected help drive decision making and program development.

ECEA RULES DEFINES EVALUATION AS:

Procedures, methods, and tools used to initially identify a gifted child, assess and monitor the child's progress, and evaluate the child and the gifted program. Evaluation includes, but need not be limited to:

- *Identifying the child's unique strengths, interests, and needs;*
- *Monitoring the child's academic achievement and growth and affective goals;*
- *Identifying the priorities and concerns of the child's family and resources to which the family and the child's school have access; and*
- *Determining program strengths and areas for program improvement. [12.01(15)(a-d)]*



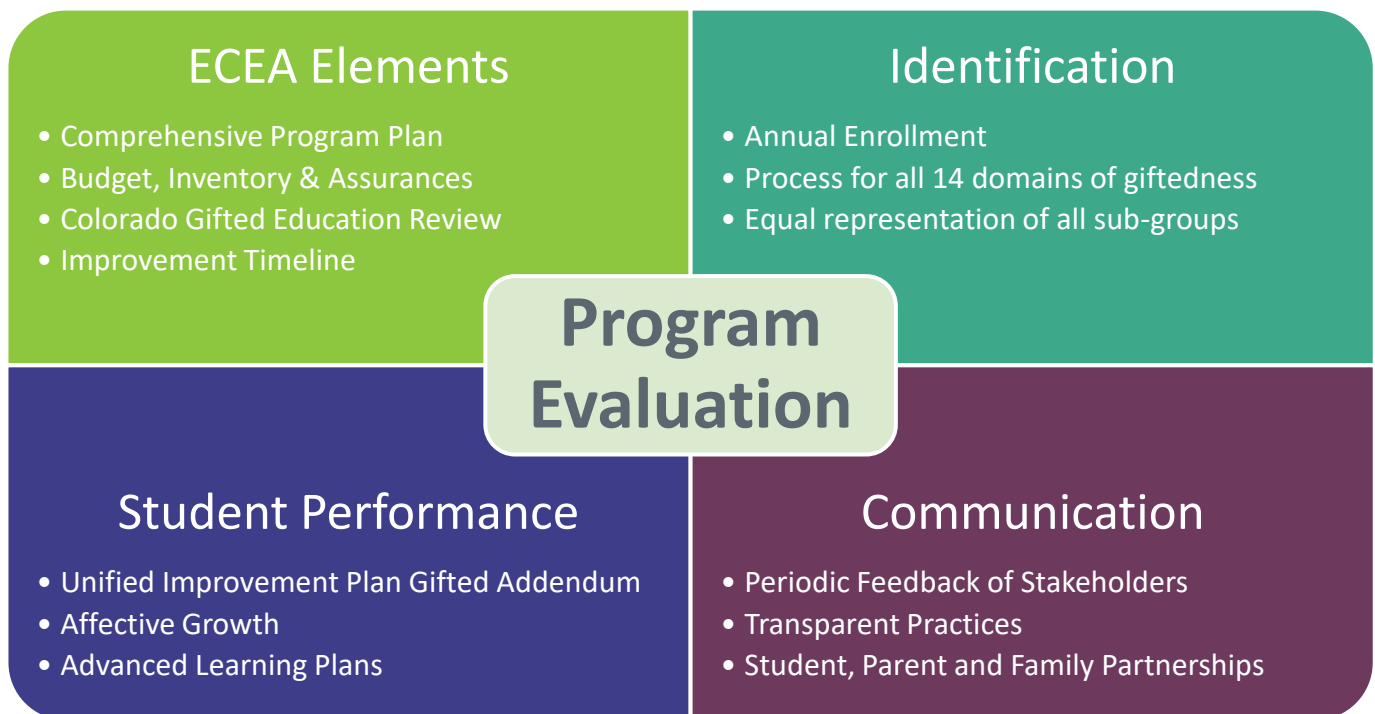


PROGRAM EVALUATION

Gifted program evaluation is an essential component for continuous growth and improvement, a requirement of the Colorado Gifted Education Review (CGER) process and a condition of state accreditation and reporting. Program evaluation occurs:

- Annually, as the AU analyzes expenditures to prepare the gifted education **budget reports** and the gifted student demographic data for the **October Pupil Count**;
- Bi-annually, as most districts prepare their **Unified Improvement Plan Gifted Addendum**; and
- Every three-five years in preparation for the AU’s **CGER** process.

Program evaluation relies on meaningful data, such as stakeholder surveys, focus group notes, gifted student performance on state and local assessments, demographic data and the monitoring of Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs). An AU is accountable for the submission of specific state reports that reflect data and evidence collected as part of a program evaluation. An inclusive program evaluation is comprised of **four** components.





ECEA ELEMENTS

The elements of ECEA Rules guide specific practices and procedures that support program evaluation and accountability.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM PLAN

The development of an AU's Comprehensive Program Plan (CPP) demonstrates commitment to identify and serve gifted students and their families aligning with local district resources, data analysis and priorities. The program plan shall be implemented by all constituent schools and districts of the AU.

"Program Elements" means a comprehensive and complete narrative of program elements. 12.01(25)

The CPP describes the AU's implementation of key requirements outlined in ECEA Rules. This plan is informed by the AU's self-evaluation, stakeholder input and gifted student data. The plan template is located in the Data Management System (DMS). 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). <http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/data>

Plans may be updated and revised on the DMS at any time during the three- to five-year monitoring cycle and after the completion of the CGER process to address targeted areas for improvement. After plans are revised in DMS, the AU Gifted Coordinator/Director contacts the Office of Gifted Education Program Administrator to request the updated plan is posted on the CDE website.

GIFTED EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS

The AU shall include in the annual plan a budget for gifted education which reflects the collaborative efforts of the AU and cost of implementing the program elements and the student goals stated in the annual comprehensive program plan. 12.02(2)(k)(i)

According to Colorado Statute 12.02(2)(k), AUs annually submit a gifted programming **Annual Budget** report and an **Expended Budget** report. The Annual Budget is submitted after the General Assembly approves the state budget and state distributions are approved by the State Board of Education. This report indicates how the AU intends to use gifted grant funds for the upcoming school year. The Expended Budget Report details the **exact** expenditures to support gifted programming from the previous school year. These reports are completed in DMS and are reviewed as part of the Desk Audit during the CGER process.

A *collaborative* process is used for decision making pertaining to the expenditure of state categorical gifted grant funds. This may include soliciting feedback or ensuring transparency in the budget process. AUs annually evaluate funding expenditures to determine if adjustments need be made to better support gifted programming services and improvement efforts. For more information about budget reports, access the [Budget Webpage](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/gtbudget): <http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/gtbudget>

AU Gifted Coordinators/Directors also complete an **Assurances Report** in DMS each year for mandatory state reporting purposes.



If an AU uses state categorical gifted funds to purchase equipment to support the gifted program plan, an **inventory** shall be maintained according to the AU/district's accounting policies.

An inventory shall be maintained of all equipment for which funding was received. These records shall be maintained throughout the useful life of the equipment. 12.05(2)

COLORADO GIFTED EDUCATION REVIEW

Each administrative unit shall comply with all applicable state and federal CGERs and regulations regarding the program plan, identification and special educational services for gifted students. 12.07 (1)

Each administrative unit shall be subject to ongoing monitoring by the Department concerning implementation of the program plan. 12.07 (2)

The Colorado Gifted Education Review (CGER) is a collaborative monitoring process that is the shared responsibility of AUs, CDE and the Gifted Education Regional Consultant (GERC). The purpose of this partnership is to increase the capacity of educators and educational systems to identify, program and be accountable for gifted learner achievement and growth. The foundational purpose of CGER is for AUs to self-evaluate their gifted program plan to determine levels of implementation for each of the primary elements of ECEA Rules.

The AU completes the Self-Evaluation in DMS and indicates specific evidence demonstrating implementation of ECEA key requirements. The CDE monitoring team reviews evidence during the CGER Desk Audit.

An onsite visit is conducted by the CGER team for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the AU's culture and climate, obtaining additional information, sharing areas of strengths and reviewing elements that may require corrective action to comply with law. After the CGER team

conducts an analysis of the Self-Evaluation, the team will make a determination on whether a Level I or Level II site visit will take place. A **Level I** visit occurs when the AU provides sufficient data in the self-evaluation for the team to determine compliance in each of the programming elements. This includes providing reports from stakeholder surveys and/or focus groups. A **Level II** visit is designated when the team needs additional data and information to confirm or change the CGER team's initial findings. A Level II visit is required if the AU does not submit program evaluation data. During a Level II visit, the CGER team will conduct stakeholder focus groups to obtain feedback on implementation of the program elements.

A planned comprehensive on-site procedure integrated with the continuous improvement and gifted education review process in the Department of Education. 12.07(4)(c)

For more information about the CGER process, access the [CGER webpage](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/cger).
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/cger>

IMPROVEMENT TIMELINE

At the conclusion of a CGER, AUs not meeting condition of law in any of the thirteen ECEA program elements complete an **Improvement Timeline**. This timeline addresses the top three priority areas and is completed within six weeks of receiving the Final CGER Report. The AU will have one year to successfully complete the corrective actions designated in the CGER Report to ensure the element(s) meets condition of law. When the AU successfully addresses the priority

Follow-up activities including the provision of technical assistance in areas of non-compliance and verification that areas of non-compliance have been corrected. 12.07(4)(d)



improvement areas and provides the CDE with evidence, additional areas of non-compliance are then addressed in a new timeline.

IDENTIFICATION

AUs shall have a process to identify students in all domains of giftedness as defined in ECEA Rules. Continual analysis of gifted student enrollment within the AU is an essential component of program evaluation. AUs shall develop methods to ensure the students identified in their AU represent all fourteen domains of giftedness and mirror the demographics of the AU, including students from traditionally underrepresented populations.

Annually, AUs/districts submit an **enrollment report** to the CDE.

According to Rules, this report includes:

The number of formally identified gifted students served through gifted programming reported by:

- *Each grade level;*
- *Gender and ethnicity;*
- *Free and reduced lunch;*
- *Area(s) of giftedness;*
- *Twice exceptionality; and*
- *Gifted preschoolers served through early entrance per local policies and procedures, if applicable.*

12.03(2)(a-f)

A method(s) to ensure equal and equitable access for all students. The program plan shall describe the efforts that the AU will make to identify gifted students from all populations, including preschool (if applicable) through twelfth grade students, minority students, economically diverse students, culturally diverse students, students with limited English proficiency and children with disabilities.

12.02(2)(c)(i)

CDE provides an annual gifted enrollment data report to the AU via DMS.

The report includes an indicator of whether significant disparities exist in the gifted population. These reports guide the AU in analyzing their gifted enrollment to determine subgroups that may be underrepresented and how their data compare to state percentages. This may lead the AU to developing specific targets for identification within the Comprehensive Program Plan to ensure equal and equitable gifted enrollment.

GIFTED STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Gifted student performance includes a focus on both the **academic** and **affective** domains. AU/districts have a variety of methods to monitor and measure student performance. Data for the purpose of performance evaluation may be objective or subjective. For example, summative and formative data from state and local assessments provide opportunities to compare individuals and groups of students to others in the state or nation in terms of mastery of academic standards. Objective data may be used to calculate student achievement and/or growth.

Achievement is a proficiency score on a specific test measuring how well a student performs against a standard. Norm-referenced assessment scores are not only used for the purposes of identification, but also to monitor student achievement over time and in comparison to other students. For example, it is expected that a gifted student identified in an *area* assessed by a state test scores at the “Exceeds Expectations” level or in the 95th percentile or above on a norm-referenced assessment. Districts may also use locally developed criterion-referenced assessments to measure gifted student achievement.



The use of growth scores provides a meaningful and valid measure to define what a student knows, understands and is able to do over a period of time.

Growth is a progress measured over a span of time. Growth scores are not qualifying data for gifted identification, but are important in building a student’s learning profile and monitoring academic progress. It is common for a gifted student to score a 95th percentile each year on a district’s norm-referenced achievement test or to earn a high score on curriculum assessments. The questions then become, “How can we determine if this student knew the information being assessed prior to receiving direct

instruction, thereby leading to a high achievement score? Is the student actually growing academically?”

Tabulating a growth score may be as simple as using data collected on a beginning-of-the-year assessment compared to data on the end-of-year assessment. A variety of norm-referenced assessments also provide student growth data depending on how many times students are assessed during the school year and when assessments are administered. Colorado uses a statistical model to calculate student growth on the state assessment. Students receive a growth percentile score for English Language Arts and Mathematics. This score is calculated by examining a student’s progress from year to year towards state standards in these two content areas. The student’s progress is compared to other students in the state with a similar score history. This is referred to as the student’s academic peer group. A student growth percentile is between 1 and 99, with 50 considered the median score.

UNIFIED IMPROVEMENT PLAN GIFTED ADDENDUM

The ECEA *annual plan*, defined as the **Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) Gifted Addendum**, serves as a means for accountability of gifted student performance. The annual plan is integrated with the district UIP as a strategy for action planning; and ideally embedded into the district UIP narratives. Through the annual plan, the AU identifies a gifted student performance data challenge, identifies a target and develops an action plan for improvement. An examination of both achievement and growth scores aids an AU/district in defining potential performance challenges addressed in the UIP Gifted Addendum and evaluate the effectiveness of gifted programming instruction. The UIP Gifted Addendum is completed either annually or bi-annually based on the size of a district and/or the district’s accountability rating. In a multi-district AU, each district submits a UIP Gifted Addendum.

Unified improvement plan addendum methods by which gifted student performance is monitored and measured for continual learning progress and how such methods align with the state accreditation process. These methods include UIP elements such as annual gifted student performance target(s) and an action plan to meet the target(s) and a timeline to report on progress toward targets. 12.02(2)(i)(i)

For more information about the Gifted UIP Addendum, access the [Gifted UIP Webpage](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/gifteduiip):
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/gifteduiip>

Methods by which student affective growth is monitored and measured for continual development (e.g. rubrics for personal journals and anecdotal data, student surveys, demonstration of self-advocacy, and student career and/or college plans). 12.02(2)(i)(ii)

AFFECTIVE GROWTH

Monitoring and measuring **affective** growth is a key requirement within ECEA Rules. The term “affective growth” encompasses observed growth in social and emotional behaviors and attitudes of students. The term is not to be confused with the psychological definition of *affect* that refers to mood and emotions. When dealing with behaviors



and attitudes, growth is observed as a change or modification in such. This can manifest as an increase or decline in a behavior/ attitude.

Affective goals may be **measured** in two ways:

Student Self-evaluation

- Document a behavior (graph, chart, calendar, journal reflection);
- Develop a portfolio (experiences, visits, action steps completed);
- Complete a survey (rank or rate an experience, behavior or ability); or
- Evaluate a performance (rubric, checklist, journal reflection).

Teacher, parent or expert evaluation

- Interview about goal attainment;
- Observation of practice and/or mastery of goal; or
- Review/rating of documents, portfolios and performances.

ADVANCED LEARNING PLANS

All identified gifted students have an **Advanced Learning Plan (ALP)**. The ALP processes, responsibilities and content are defined in ECEA Rule.

A complete ALP Guidebook can be found on the Office of Gifted Education [ALP webpage](#).

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

"Advanced learning Plan" or "ALP" means a written record of a gifted student's strengths, academic and affective learning goals and the resulting programming utilized with each gifted child and considered in educational planning and decision making. 12.01(2)

Identified gifted students' ALPs contain standards-based **academic** and **affective** goals. Academic goals are written to support the student's identified strength and/or interest area(s) and align to the [Colorado Academic Standards](#).

Affective goals typically reflect one of the following:

- Development of one or more of the [National Association of Gifted Students](#) (NAGC) affective standards to foster personal, social, communication, cultural or leadership competencies;
- Modification or elimination of a personal or social behavior that my interfere with a student reaching his/her potential;
- Colorado Academic Standards for Comprehensive Health;
- Preparation for college and/or career readiness.

Annually, bi-annually or during the CGER process, the AU Gifted Coordinator/Director, as well as building administrators and teachers, review ALPs to ensure they are purposeful and support individual student growth and achievement. The **ALP Self-Review** document found in DMS aids an AU's internal examination and monitoring of their ALPs.



COMMUNICATION

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

PERIODIC FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Soliciting input from stakeholders is part of a continuous program evaluation process and defined in ECEA Rules. Stakeholders include administrators, teachers, families and students. When surveying stakeholder groups, it is important that data represent the AU's demographics and that the response rate provides reliable data. If an AU chooses to solicit input through focus groups and/or a parent advocacy committee, it is important that groups are representative of the AU's population and protocols are followed to elicit objective and honest feedback from participants. CDE provides guidance on development of surveys, holding focus group interviews and reporting of data.

The AU informs parents, educators, and other required persons about their method(s) for periodic feedback.

[12.02(2)(i)(iv-v)]

Access this document on the [Program Evaluation Webpage](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/programevaluation): <http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/programevaluation>

TRANSPARENT PRACTICES

Information for parents and families of gifted students should be easily accessible. A program evaluation includes asking stakeholders if they know where and how to access information about gifted education. Websites provide an opportunity for AUs to centralize communication and provide links to a variety of resources. However, it is also important to consider families who do not have access to the Internet or e-mail and how information is disseminated to them. Additionally, surveys should be available in the primary languages of the AU.

PARENTS, FAMILY AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIPS

Engagement means the collaboration of families, schools, and communities as active partners in improving learner, classroom, school, district and state outcomes.

[12.01(14)]

Procedures for Parent, Family and Student Engagement and

Communication is one of the thirteen ECEA elements of program design. The AU's Comprehensive Program Plan describes procedures and practices to promote stakeholder communication and engagement. Understanding the culture and climate of the AU or district guides the development of opportunities for parents, families and gifted students. Program evaluation includes measuring the effectiveness of the AU's engagement practices.

Access more information about this element at the [Gifted Education Website](http://www.cde.state.co.us/gt/engagementcommunication):

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

CONDUCTING AN INTERNAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

When conducting an internal program evaluation, there are five recommended steps an AU may consider according to Drs. Neumeister and Burney in their book, *Gifted Program Evaluation: A Handbook for Administrators & Coordinators*.

1. TRIANGULATION OF DATA

To accurately evaluate a gifted program plan, researchers recommend collecting at least three (3) different data points for every program element being assessed. This process is referred to as triangulating data. This strengthens the validity of the findings. The collection of quantitative and qualitative data ensure appropriate representation of different data types. The first step in planning for a program evaluation is to determine the data points that will be examined. Data points may include:

- Student achievement data from state and local assessments;
- Student growth data from state and local assessments;
- Identification demographic data;
- Survey results;
- Narrative comments;
- Observations;
- Interviews; and
- Focus Groups.



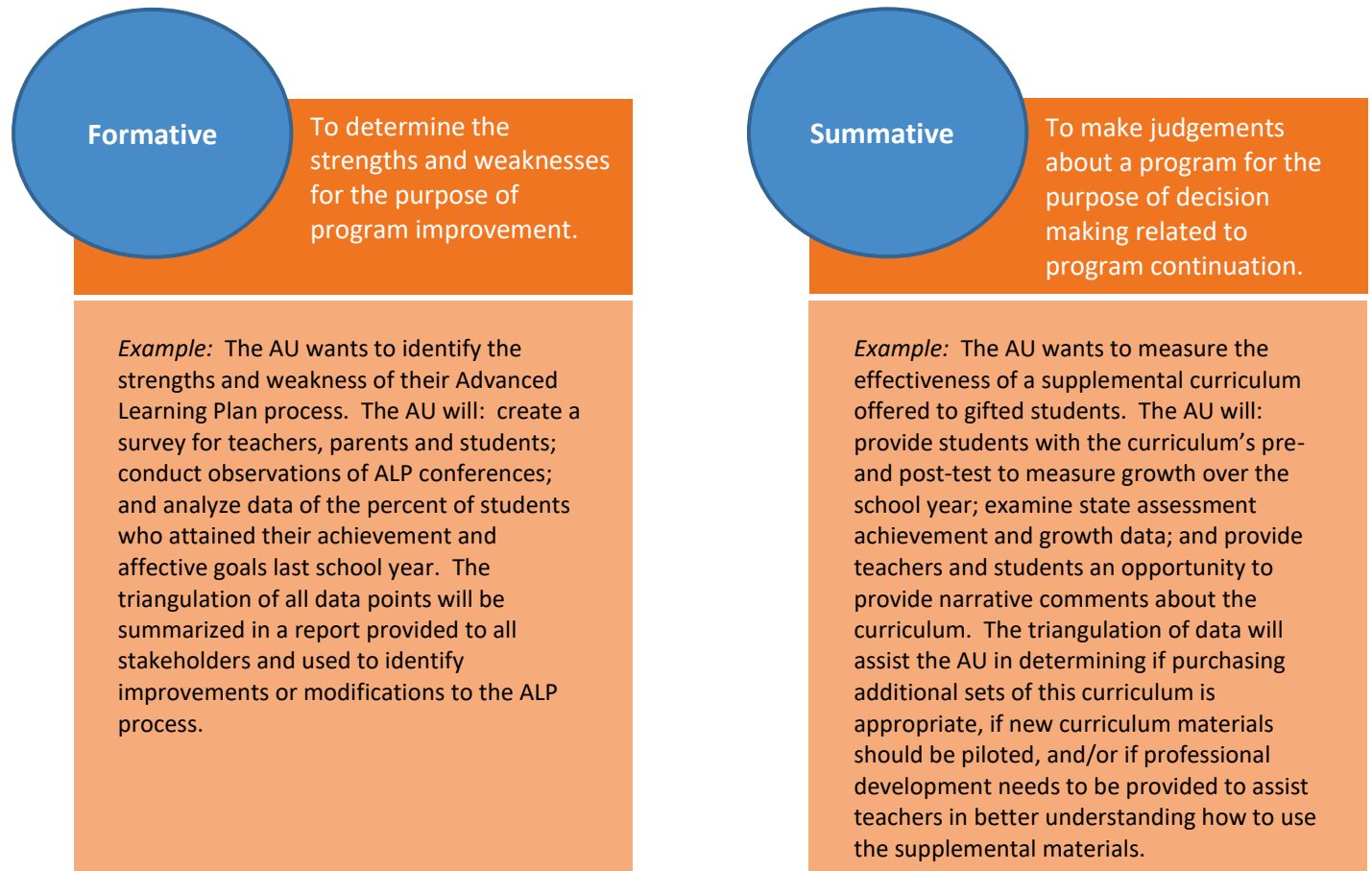
2. DEVELOP A PROGRAM EVALUATION COMMITTEE

A committee of representative stakeholders come together to plan, implement, analyze and report data collected during a program evaluation. Members of the committee should be knowledgeable about the gifted program plan, but not have too much vested interest in the evaluation results that might prevent him/her from being objective when interpreting the data.



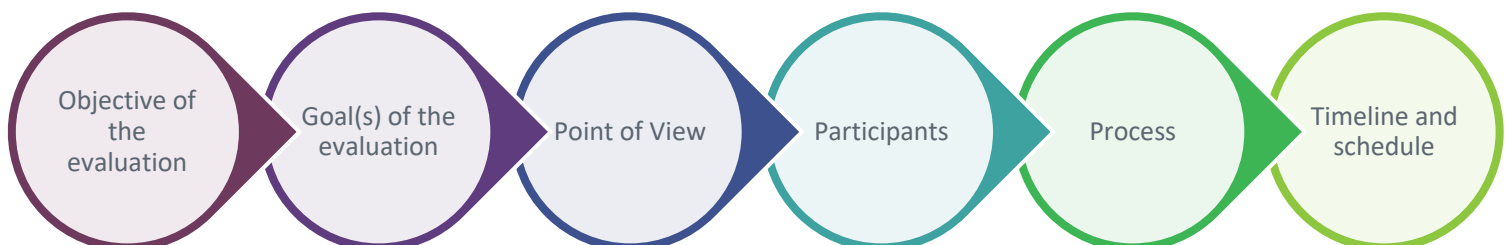
3. IDENTIFY THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

There are two primary purposes of program evaluation.



4. SCOPE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

The committee will identify the scope of program evaluation. Considerations may include:





5. STRUCTURE OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

The committee next identifies the structure of the program evaluation. Considerations may include:

- Platform used for survey development;
- Organization of the survey;
- Distribution process of the survey;
- Select participants for focus group interviews;
- Determine questions for survey and/or focus groups;
- Construction of the survey; and
- Logistical planning of focus group interviews.

When surveying or conducting interviews of students, it is important to follow the AU/district's protocol and procedures for collecting student input. There are specific state laws pertaining to what information can be collected from students without parent permission. The committee should always obtain the superintendent or executive director's permission prior to initiating a program evaluation.

6. ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

The committee should consider best practices for conducting a survey or holding focus group interviews. Additional guidance on developing a program evaluation survey or conducting focus groups interviews can be found the [Program Evaluation Webpage](#):

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

7. ANALYSIS OF COLLECTED DATA

After data collection, the next tasks are analyzing and drawing conclusions. -It is important to remember, data collected through surveys represent a stakeholder's perception. Understanding these perceptions will assist the AU to determine next steps to better clarify any misunderstandings stakeholders may have about a program element. When survey or focus group data are analyzed, it is important to break down the results by different groups (e.g., by building level or stakeholder group) to gain a deeper understanding of how each of the program elements is working at each level. Reporting of raw data may be difficult or overwhelming to understand without deeper analysis.

Paint a visual data-driven picture using charts, tables and other graphics to report collected data.

The use of charts, tables and other graphics will help paint a better visual, data-driven picture. Reporting a long list of narrative comments is not as beneficial as breaking down the comments into major categories or "big ideas." Manipulating the data by increasing or decreasing the "x" and "y" axis of a graph is not ethically advised and will devalue the overall process of a program evaluation.

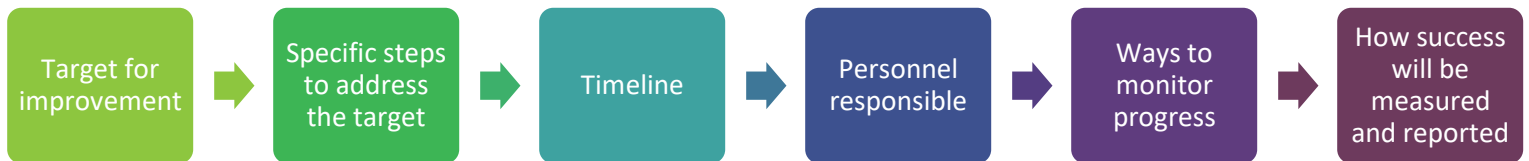
8. COMMUNICATE THE FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

The next step of a program evaluation is to communicate the findings to your different stakeholder groups. Depending on the audience, different types of reports may need to be developed. It is important to remember that any data including a student's Personal Identifiable Information (PII) is never shared in a public forum, like a school board meeting. Before sharing program evaluation data, consider laws pertaining the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA.) Communication of findings might include reports, oral presentations and meetings.

Stakeholder feedback gathered during the dissemination of the findings will help the committee determine priorities and create an action plan.

8. DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN

The final step of program evaluation includes the committee coming together to summarize the findings, determine priorities, make recommendations and develop an action plan to yield the most effective change. An action plan may include:



HELPFUL RESOURCES

Neumeister, Kristie Spiers & Burney, Virginia H., *Gifted Program Evaluation: A Handbook for Administrators and Coordinators*, Prufrock Press, Waco, TX, 2012.

Self-assess Your P-12 Practice or Programs Using the NAGC Gifted Programming Standards, NAGC, 2015.