

## Highline Public Schools Highly Capable Annual Plan, 2018-19

This plan was developed by members of the Teaching, Learning, and Leadership team in summer 2018 in response to the state's annual form package 217 for Highly Capable funding. It is a dynamic document, and will be revised with support of teachers, principals, and families via the Highly Capable Advisory Team and Multi-Disciplinary Committee. Between the fall of 2017 and summer of 2018, through conversations and survey responses from stakeholders across the system, the following areas have been identified for continued prioritization and development:

- Continued development of variety of service delivery options for students identified as Highly Capable, including options within general education settings.
- Support for teachers in general education and self-contained highly capable settings to understand and respond to the unique needs of highly capable learners.
- Increased coherence of offerings and supports in our self-contained Challenge program
- Facilitated learning opportunities for staff and families to support the social-emotional needs of highly capable students.

Additionally, we continue to prioritize strategies to improve equitable identification of students across all student groups in Highline. This is an area that has proved stagnant over the last five years. Strategies to improve proportional representation of students are included in Section 2, Identification Process.

This plan is meant to be a comprehensive document that pulls together information shared on the district website, in letters to schools and families, and in programmatic documents used with teachers.

Sections:

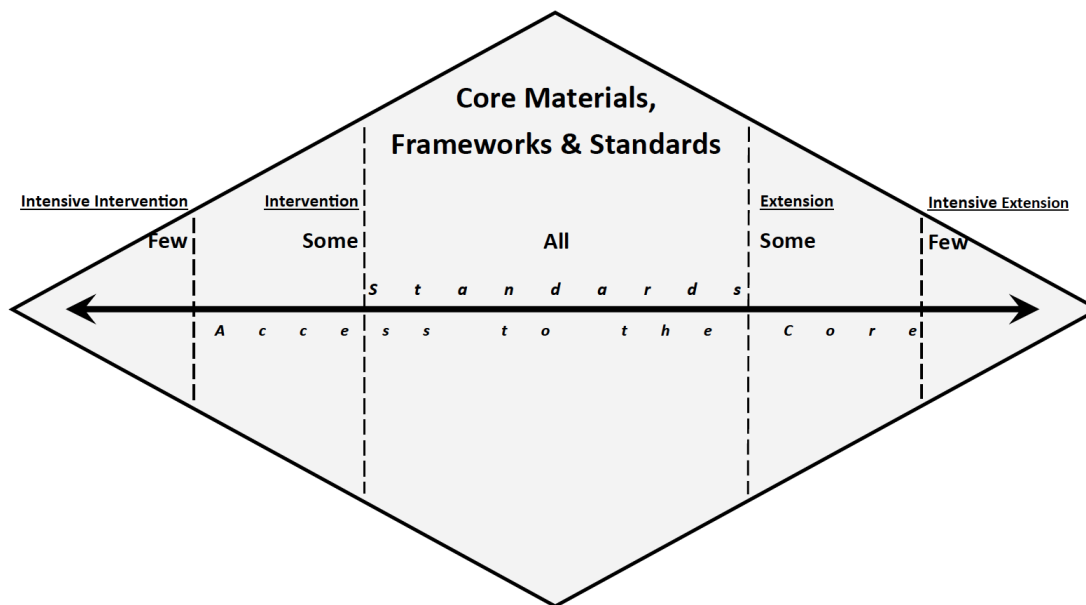
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### **Mission, Vision, and Values**

In Highline we are committed to ensuring that every student is known by name, strength, and need, and graduates prepared for the future they choose. We are committed to providing academic challenge for our students who are meeting and/or exceeding standards so that they can meet their full potential.

In order to realize this vision, we are building a strong multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), one that is dynamically responsive to individual students' strengths and needs, allowing for personalized learning that provides for additional academic challenge ("extension") enabling students to reach their full potential. We recognize that differences in each child's learning opportunities ages 0-5 can have impact their readiness for success in school and their performance in the early years of school. Therefore, we use the CogAT, a cognitive assessment, for all students in 1st and 2nd grade in order to build a broad

picture of a student's learning potential and to help us to target both intervention and extension services and supports. Using this data we are able to more equitably identify students who will benefit from highly capable services.



In our [Strategic Plan](#), we have identified five bold goals supported by a foundation of equity, instruction, relationships, and support. Our goals include:

**School Culture:** Our schools are welcoming and safe places where students and staff are respected and supported to succeed.

**Growth and Mastery:** Students will make a minimum of one year of growth annually, meeting or exceeding standards in all grade levels.

**Digital and Media Literacy:** Students will graduate with the problem solving and critical thinking skills necessary to live and work in a digital world.

**Bilingual and Biliterate:** Students will graduate bilingual and biliterate.

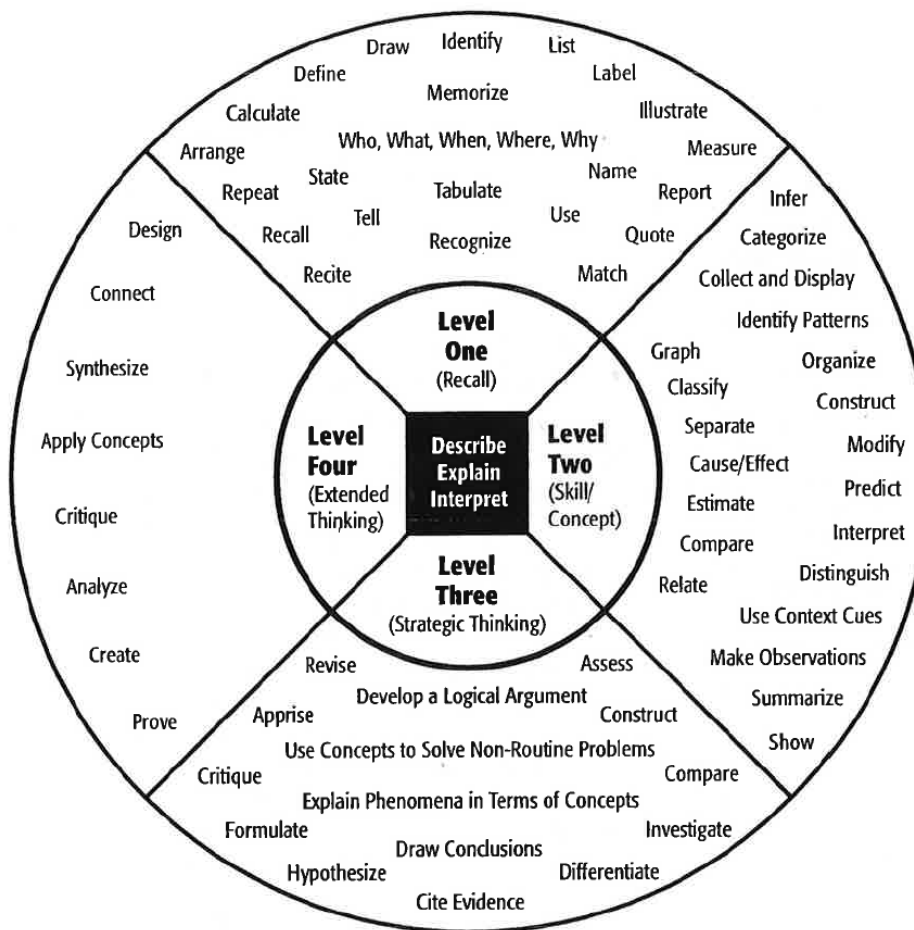
**High School Graduation:** Students will graduate from high school prepared for the future they choose.

As we work to ensure these goals are realized for all students, we are committed to identifying and meeting the needs of our students who are highly capable. Highly capable students are “students who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels when compared with others of their age, experiences, or environments.” (WAC 392-170-035)

Rigorous state learning standards, including the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards as well as social emotional competencies, set a high level of expectation for our

students aligned with 21st century college and career readiness. Based on Advisory and staff input, we will continue to transition the program from one solely focused on acceleration to one that also focuses on helping students achieve greater Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and the habits of learning that we now know make for lifelong learners and contribute to the greatest success in school, college, career, and citizenship.

## Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels



We often hear from teachers and families of students served as highly capable that their student “doesn’t try very hard” or “has holes in their learning.” We know from research that this is often the result when we see “gifted” as a static quality and we focus solely on acceleration. We also know from research that students do not learn the same way or at the same rate; furthermore, they may need to approach learning from multiple perspectives and in general, will benefit from focusing on a depth of understanding not just breadth of content.

As such, our goal is to provide balanced opportunities for students to accelerate their learning when appropriate while also achieving a greater depth of knowledge to reach their full potential as scholars. Students should make at least one grade level of growth from their starting point, and they should

consistently demonstrate a capacity to engage independently in extended thinking, synthesizing, proving, critiquing, and creating.

Equity is central tenet of our values. We are committed to ensuring that students who are identified as Highly Capable increasingly reflect the demographics of our district, and are working to provide both early preparation and talent development for all students and an identification process that considers as many students as possible. In addition to the priorities named above, continual strengthening of our early preparation and student identification processes will be areas of ongoing focus.

### **Identification Process:**

We continue to experience disproportionate identification of students from many of our student groups in Highline. The graphic below illustrates the lack of progress in this area, specifically for our 2-8 Challenge program, over the last five years.

**Student Enrollment –  
Elementary and Middle School Challenge Programs**

	2014-15 354 students	2015-16 344 students	2016-17 346 students	2017-18 340 students	2018-19 319 students*	2018-19 Highline Public Schools Enrollment
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0%	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%	1%	1%
Asian	22%	26%	23%	19%	19%	14%
Black or African American	6%	8%	8%	8%	8%	16%
Hispanic	12%	13%	13%	12%	12%	39%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	4%
Two or More Races	11%	9%	9%	7%	7%	4%
White	47%	43%	46%	53%	53%	22%
ELL	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	26%
Special Education	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	15%

\*18 additional students in grades 2-3 are being served through a Highly Capable Learning Plan in 2018-19, for a total of 337 students receiving services in 2018-19. These students are not represented in the demographic data above.

Specific strategies that have been identified for 2018-19 include:

- Intentional outreach to staff: School-focused outreach to ensure teachers and staff in our underrepresented schools understand qualities of Highly Capable Learners and access the nomination process for students for whom academic measures may not accurately represent a student's capabilities.

- Improves communication to families: Moving from paper/backpack notifications to Peach Jar, an electronic platform which families refer to regularly for school and district communications.
- Updated measures for screening/identification: We will be adding both iReady and iStation to our collection of screening/identification tools. iStation in particular provides data in both English and Spanish for our students in Dual Language Settings.

### ***Notification***

Families are notified about highly capable programs in several ways:

- Our district website is regularly updated with the most current information on our Highly Capable programming, selection process, and relevant timelines. If specific dates for the current school year are not yet available, the website says, for example, “check back or call our office in December, 2018.” The date that is listed here is well before any testing might occur, and after our deadline for detailing out each step of the process.
- A letter is sent home via our electronic newsletter platform, Peachjar, to families of all students in grades K-6 notifying them of the program and our process for testing and selection. This letter is not sent to students in secondary setting because almost all HPS students have been screened multiple times and have received our notification letter in earlier grades. This letter is sent home one month prior to the start of any testing and is translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Somali.
- We will also utilize school based staff and use social media and additional electronic communication platforms to promote our highly capable programs as appropriate.

### ***Screening/Referrals***

In order to ensure that we are providing equitable opportunities for our students in Highline, all students in grades K, 1, and 2 in HPS are screened for Highly Capable services. We think this is critical in the early years because of the rapid and variable brain development in young children. We also recognize that intelligence does not always present itself in traditional ways in early grades, especially for students for whom English may not be a first language, without access to early learning experiences, or living in poverty. This is the basis of our talent development model.

Students in any grade (including K-2) may be nominated for consideration for Highly Capable services by their parent/guardian, teacher, principal, other staff member, other students, or a community member by calling or e-mailing the Teaching, Learning and Leadership department at any time until the testing process begins. If a student is nominated and their grades/test scores are generally proficient, she/he is automatically included in the testing process.

In grades 3 and higher, a student may also be nominated for the program by a school based MTSS team after a review of assessment data, evidence of learning, and/or consideration of other highly capable attributes.

### **Screening Procedures**

After the universal nomination, we screen **all** students in grades K-12 using the following assessment results:

	iReady Assessment	CogAT 7 Screener	SBA	PSAT	Fountas & Pinnell	ELPA21	iStation	Classroom / Unit Assessments
K	X					X	X	X
1-2	X	X			X	X	X	X
3-6	X		X		X	X	X	X
7-12	X*		X	X		X		X

*\*iReady is administered for selected students only in grades 9-12*

For screening, we look at the confluence of data about students using very broad criteria when determining who to bring in for additional testing, based on the recommendations of the Multi-Disciplinary Committee. Determinations are informed by consistently high performance across measures, as well as significant areas of rapid growth.

### **About the assessments:**

- The iReady assessment is our district adopted growth measurement tool, and is administered two to three times each year English Language Arts and Mathematics. The assessment focuses on student mastery of and growth in state learning standards.
- The CogAT 7 Screener is a test that all 1st and 2nd grade students take each year that gives schools a more complete picture of students' cognitive processing speed, verbal reasoning, and non-numeric problem-solving skills. Schools and teachers use this data to build a more complete picture of a student and help identify areas of strength and need that may not yet be evident in traditional academic assessments.
- The SBA (Smarter Balanced Assessment) is a state-required assessments used to gauge students' proficiency on grade-level standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- Fountas & Pinnell is a comprehensive literacy assessment that assesses a student's reading level as measured by accuracy, understanding, and fluency.
- The ELPA21 is a state-required assessment of students' English-language proficiency. It is given in the spring each year to students identified in last year's ELPA testing, during our intake/registration with the school district, or students identified by teachers as needing additional support to learn English.
- iStation is a tool utilized in our elementary Dual Language programs, which assesses students' strengths and needs in math and literacy in both English and Spanish.
- Classroom/unit assessments - Unit assessments are provided as part of the standard curriculum in math and literacy. Additional classroom formative assessments are ongoing observations that happen informally at several points throughout each day but include on-demand writing tasks and student presentation of work.

### ***Assessment and Selection***

The only additional assessment that is traditionally given to inform selection decisions is the full CogAT 7. This assessment has three sections: Verbal, Quantitative and Nonverbal. This assessment gives us more information about students' cognitive processing ability in areas that inform literacy, math, and general problem-solving.

After all assessment data are collected, the Multidisciplinary Committee (MSC) meets in the spring to review the data and collection of evidence to make recommendations for identification as Highly Capable and placement into the Challenge program. There is a significantly higher bar for assessment results in the selection phase than in the screening phase. Frequently the MSC will ask for administrators to contact teachers to get more information about a student, and will recommend a course of action based on the information gathered. In 2013-2014, the MSC reviewed four of the most-used teacher rating scales that are available and found them all to be subject to significant bias. In 2017-18, we incorporated a characteristic inventory, completed by teachers and families, as a supporting piece of data to help us better understand the individual learner. No students will be excluded from consideration based on this data point. Rather, our intention is to use the tool as a resource to ensure we are not overlooking students who may benefit from Highly Capable programming.

The MDC is comprised of people who hold the following roles in the district: central office administrators, curriculum and instruction directors, special education team members, school counselors and/or psychologists, principals in schools with highly capable programs, and teachers of students who are identified as highly capable.

### ***Caregiver permission to test and beginning services***

As soon as students are nominated, a letter is sent to each student's home asking for permission to take an additional test to determine eligibility for HC services. The letter includes a reply form that we ask families to return by US mail, by dropping off at the school or district office, or to inform us via e-mail that they approve of the testing. The letter also includes information about the program and the testing process and is translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, and Cambodian, and Somali.

For all students who take this test, a letter is sent home informing the family of whether the student is invited to acceptance admittance into the Challenge program, qualified for services, is on the waitlist for services, or did not qualify. For students identified as highly capable and offered services, they must return a form that indicates their desire to accept the services. They can return this form by mail, by dropping off at the school or district office, or by informing us by e-mail. The letter has been translated into Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, and Cambodian.

### **Services to Identified Students**

We strive to provide educational opportunities that take into account each student's strengths and needs. At its best, instruction should be personalized, data-driven, and strength-based. Our services in Kindergarten and 1st grade are provided in the student's home school/classroom, with teachers providing extensions during literacy and math blocks.

Our services in grades 2-8 include a magnet program we call "Challenge" which is located at two elementary schools and two middle schools. New this year, we are also offering a Highly Capable Learning Plan option for grade 2 and 3. This option allows students to receive services in their home

school, in a general education classroom setting. This option will be added for additional grade levels in subsequent years. Highly Capable program and differentiation specialists will also be available to assist teachers/school teams in developing implementing student programming.

Our services in high school include intentional course pathways that continue students' accelerated trajectory toward success in college-like coursework (AP, IB, Running Start and College in the High School). Students will be encouraged to take these college-like courses as early as possible in high school and continue the learning trajectory by taking the highest level courses available either at their school or at local colleges through Running Start.

#### Program Components:

##### Literacy

- Our highly capable services use a balanced literacy model in which a significant amount of time in the literacy block is focused on literacy activities specific to the students' level of reading and writing.
- Our teachers providing highly capable services are implementing the Lucy Calkins writing units of study K-8 and reading units of student K-5. These research-based units enable teachers to push students along a progression of learning that results in a high level of cognitive challenge and Depth of Knowledge.
- In the Challenge program (2-8), there is a strong focus on interdisciplinary projects with Language Arts, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics collaborating on high-level, rigorous projects that push students to think critically and creatively and express their understanding through multiple types of written and oral expressions, operating in the highest levels of Depth of Knowledge. Teachers who support students identified as highly capable who are not in the Challenge program are encouraged to provide opportunities for rigorous interdisciplinary thinking as well.

##### Math

- Our highly capable curriculum in grades 2-6 is aligned to state learning standards. Students may be exposed to content 1-2 years beyond grade level when appropriate, with the priority being depth of understanding of grade level content to ensure success in advanced courses later in the student's academic career.
- In grades 7-8. Math course placement is determined based on individual student readiness and need, based on assessment data with teacher and family input.

Our professional learning for teachers of students identified as highly capable is focused on helping our teachers build deep understanding of the state learning standards so they can identify when students are approaching standard, proficient on the standard, and above standard, as well as building their understanding of units, lessons, and activities that move students from Depth of Knowledge levels 1 and 2 where they are simply learning facts and basic skills into levels 3 and 4 where they can think strategically, analyze across ideas, solve complex problems in multiple ways, and prove points using knowledge gained at different times and in different ways. Additionally, targeted professional learning opportunities will be provided for teachers in general education and highly capable settings around understanding and responding to the unique needs of highly capable learners.

## **Evaluation**

In order to meet our goals of excellence and equity for students identified as highly capable services, it is critical that we engage in robust program evaluation. We believe that students receiving highly capable services should master, not just be proficient in, grade-level state learning standards. This would mean they are performing at a “distinguished” level of Depth of Knowledge (level 4), whereas most students who are on grade level would perform at “proficient” or level 3.

Our iReady and Smarter Balanced Assessments are the best indicator of that growth and performance, and the data are reviewed each summer for students receiving highly capable services. Annual surveys are also administered to students, families, and staff involved with highly capable programming, allowing for valuable information around learning and growth areas that are harder to measure via traditional assessments.

The other critical factor that we evaluate is equity of services. State law requires us to “review identification procedures to make sure student selection reflects the demographics of the area they serve.” While some progress has been made over the last several years, we are far from achieving proportionate representation across student groups. Some of the steps we are taking to continue to move our service demographics toward those of the district as a whole include:

- Working with principals and school teams to continue to build understanding about students who may be highly capable so more identification and ownership can be led by the schools themselves.
- Community meetings in multiple languages to inform families about services for students identified as Highly Capable.
- Continued emphasis on early identification and support of all students who fit generalizable criteria that are indicative of exceptional creativity, intuition, and innate curiosity.

