COLORADO
Department of Education

Gifted Annual Plan
Guidance Handbook

Office of Gifted Education

Denver CO 80202

Revised March 2024

Last Edited March 19, 2024

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Developing Cohesive Annual Plans for Gifted Education

This document outlines the process for creating Gifted Education Annual Plans to support ongoing improvement cycles.

The Annual Plan: A Roadmap for Strong Gifted Education

The Annual Plan, mandated by the Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA), builds upon the long-term vision and base of the Comprehensive Program Plan (CPP) as well as insights from Gifted Education Monitoring (GEM). It serves as a one-year roadmap that is adaptable to data and current needs (CDE, 2023). This flexibility allows Administrative Units (AUs) and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to identify specific actions and targets for supporting gifted student growth and achievement.

Benefits of the Annual Plan

- Aligns with Strategic Vision: The Annual Plan should integrate with the AU's overall strategic vision, ensuring gifted education efforts contribute to the broader goals.
- Self-Monitoring and Evaluation: It provides a mechanism for AUs to evaluate progress and identify areas for improvement between the five-year CPP and GEM cycles.
- Accountability: The Annual Plan demonstrates the district's commitment to fulfilling Colorado's statutory mandate to provide gifted education.

Continuous Improvement Through Annual Planning

By creating Annual Plans, AUs engage in a continuous improvement cycle for gifted education services. This cyclical process involves:

- Data Review: Regularly analyzing data helps identify areas for improvement.
- Program Evaluation: Existing programs are assessed to determine effectiveness.
- Results Analysis: Results and impact are used to inform future planning.

For maximum impact, Annual Plans should be tailored to the specific context and initiatives of each AU. Collaboration among stakeholders and the elimination of departmental silos are essential for developing sustainable and effective goals.

Development Procedures

Each administrative unit is responsible for the development of an Annual Plan in which they identify a major improvement strategy or strategies for the year. This process aligns and is expected to connect with the District Unified Improvement Plan (DUIP). Colorado's approach to improvement planning includes a continuous improvement cycle.

Last Edited March 19, 2024

- Focus attention on the right things
- Evaluate performance by gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data
- Plan improvement strategies based on data and root cause analysis, and
- Implement planned improvement strategies.

This cycle exists and overlaps with gifted programs in several ways. The Comprehensive Program Plan (CPP) explains how elements are implemented. Every five years, all elements are evaluated as part of CDE's Gifted Education Monitoring (GEM), and AUs receive a Monitoring Compliance Report (MCR), which supports the planning of improvement strategies. The Annual Plan allows AUs to use a continuous improvement cycle in between GEMs to focus on 1-3 elements (instead of all elements like the GEM). Additionally, the Annual Plan provides an opportunity for continuous improvement in gifted education to connect and align with the DUIP.
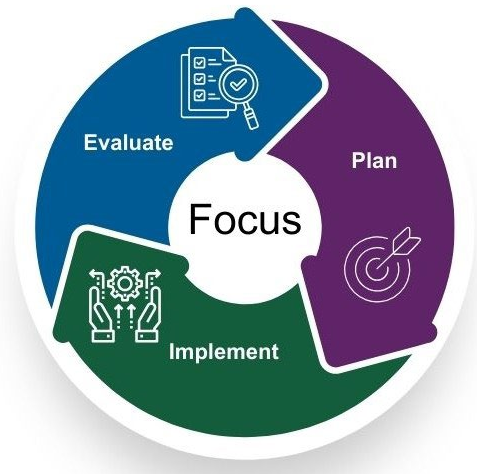
Step 1: Program Element Selection

The Gifted Education annual plan requires each AU to identify one to three major improvement strategies annually. BOCES or Mutli-District AUs may set improvement strategies for the entire AU, groups within the AU, or individual districts at the discretion of the Gifted Director of Record. In order to support ongoing work to meet rule and bridge GEM findings, major improvement strategies will align with ECEA Program elements. Annually, the AU will identify one or more program elements to focus on as areas of improvement based on program elements within their CPP or from the GEM process. Within the annual plan, the areas of improvement will link the selected program element(s) to student performance challenge(s) and establish annual target(s) identified to shift practice and improve gifted student performance. A complete annual plan from each AU is due by April 15th each year.

Identify

Before selecting a major improvement strategy and establishing targets, it's crucial to gather and organize relevant data (qualitative and quantitative) from various sources to support informed decision-making.

In evaluating gifted education effectiveness, AUs are often faced with two extremes:
- **Oversimplification**: Identifying and answering easy-to-answer questions but getting insignificant or irrelevant results because readily available, but not relevant, data is used.
- **Limited Data Sources**: AU Gifted Directors of Record might be restricted to traditional data sources, neglecting rich alternative data like objective and subjective assessments (Callahan, 2007, p. 9).

As information is gathered, consider including data from four types of data available at the local level. They are:

- Performance Data: Focuses on student outcomes, including assessment scores, growth results, and educational outcomes like dropout/graduation rates.
- Demographic Data: Describes the AUs' or BOCES' member districts characteristics, including student measures like the percentage of free/reduced lunch and staff measures like the number of new teachers.
- Process Data: Describes programming, strategies, and practices that might affect performance, as well as measures like attendance and behavior that predict other outcomes.
- Perception Data: Reflects the experiences and views of stakeholders, including climate surveys, implementation surveys, and information from focus groups.

In order to gather relevant data to support the development of the Annual Plan, consider including a variety of levels of data. Each level of data provides different and valuable information about the current strengths and gaps within your AU's existing gifted education services.

- Level 1 Satellite Data: Useful for broad trends and patterns (e.g., overall achievement scores across all gifted students).
- Level 2 Map Data: Provides deeper insights into specific groups or subgroups (e.g., comparing achievement within each grade or subject area for students with similar learning needs).
- Level 3 Street Data: Offers granular details about individual participants or small groups (e.g., understanding individual student progress within a specific programming option).

By thoughtfully gathering and analyzing data from various sources, you can make informed decisions to improve gifted program elements and maximize their effectiveness for all students.

Analyze

Review and analyze the data collected to identify trends within the AU, which will help determine the significant improvement strategy or strategies. Begin by considering what question(s) might inform the analysis of the existing data.

Callahan (2007) states, "attend to questions relating to areas of the program that are of central functional importance. That is, success of the program is highly dependent on the success of that component…one should identify questions that are suggestive of problems. These are often generated around areas that are not well defined, where program design is in question or is in controversy, where there has been a history of problems - either in that particular program or gifted programs in general, or areas marked by staff disagreement" (pg. 8).

Sample questions to guide data analysis might include:
Student performance and achievement:

- Overall: What are the overall trends in gifted student performance across schools, grade levels, and subjects?
- Are there any patterns in student performance on different types of assessments?
- How has gifted student performance changed over time?

- Which gifted students are at risk of falling behind or not growing and what programming might be effective?
- Specific groups: How are gifted students from low-income families, minority groups, or students with disabilities performing compared to their peers?
- Impact of programming: Are the current programming options designed to improve student performance having the desired effect?
- What current programming options are most effective in improving student performance?

School climate and culture:

- Attendance: What are the school's attendance rates, and are there any patterns by grade level or student group?
- What factors contribute to gifted student disengagement or absenteeism?
- Discipline: What are the most common disciplinary infractions, and are there any patterns by grade level or student group?
- Student engagement: How engaged are students in their learning?
- School safety: Does the school have a safe and positive learning environment?

Equity and access:

- Opportunities: Are all gifted students having equal opportunities to learn and succeed?
- Barriers: What barriers prevent some gifted students from reaching their full potential?
- Are there any systemic barriers that prevent gifted students from achieving their full potential?
- Resources: Are resources distributed equitably across different schools and gifted student groups?

Resource Allocation:

- Are gifted education resources being allocated equitably across different schools and programming options?
- Are resources adequate and available to execute programming to support gifted student performance?
- Are planned activities adequate to meet the needs of gifted students within the AU?
- Which student groups are targeted for activities? Which student groups are not? (e.g., grade levels, strength areas, etc.)
- How can data be used to inform more effective budgeting decisions?
- How does the existing staffing model impact gifted students' performance?
- What are the most cost-effective strategies for improving student outcomes?

Remember:

- These are just a few examples, and the specific questions asked will depend on local goals and the data available.
- It is important to consider both quantitative and qualitative data when analyzing student performance.
- Be mindful of data validity and reliability.

- How accurate and reliable is the data being used?
- What are the potential limitations of the data?
- Be mindful of potential biases in the data and how it is interpreted.
- How can we ensure equitable data analysis so that students are not placed at an undue disadvantage?
- Use data to inform, not dictate, your decisions.
- Many of these questions are explored during a GEM visit and next steps are outlined in the MCR. This may be a great place to start if feeling overwhelmed by all the possibilities, data sources, questions, etc.

Additional guiding questions can be found within the National Association for Gifted Children's Guiding Questions to Apply the Pre-K to Grade 12 Gifted Programming Standards.

Step 2: Select a Major Improvement Strategy

After completing the data identification and analysis, each AU will select at least one major improvement strategy. The major improvement strategy will fall under the umbrella of one of the program elements within ECEA. AU Gifted Directors may select up to three improvement strategies, if they wish.

In addition to the data analysis guiding the selection of the major improvement strategy, the selection should also align with one or more of the following:

- An area identified for next steps in a Monitoring Compliance Report (MCR)
- An area which aligns with district, AU, or BOCES Unified Improvement Plans
- An area in which next steps were written into the Comprehensive Program Plan

Step 3: Provide Reasoning for the Selection of the Major Improvement Strategy

Next, provide a short explanation of the reasoning for selecting this program element. This explanation can include reflection from previous target(s), integration of feedback from monitoring, alignment to district/BOCES priorities, measurement of success of the prior actions, data analysis, policies and procedures, and/or research, etc. Within the short explanation, give a quick summary about the connections. For example, "Identification Procedures was identified as partially compliant in our Monitoring Compliance Report. We will focus on this area to ensure we provide equal and equitable access for all students."

Step 4: Determine the Student Performance Challenge This Will Address

Once the major improvement strategy has been identified, the next step is to articulate the student performance challenge. This section of the annual plan requires the AU to determine a performance challenge for gifted students within the AU. The data analysis conducted to identify the major improvement strategy should also provide information necessary to uncover performance challenges that the area identified is impacting. For example, the data analysis might have uncovered gaps in the identification process, resulting in fewer than expected students to be identified in math and performing at an advanced level.

Step 5: Set Annual Target(s), Action Steps, and Timelines

Each Major Improvement Strategy will include specific, sequential Action Steps that identify an action needed, date, and resources needed (as applicable) that include a date and detail required actions and resources (as applicable). These Action Steps describe the incremental actions and tasks that are needed to bring a strategy to life. The Action Steps should aim to resolve the root causes of the plan's Student Performance Challenges, just like the Major Improvement Strategy itself.

Step 6: Anticipated Impact on Gifted Student Performance

Step Six is to articulate the anticipated impact of the focused effort on the identified major improvement strategy area as it ties to student performance challenges. Building on the above example, the AU would select identification procedures as their major improvement strategy, followed by an explanation of how gifted student performance is impacted by the lack of identification procedures. This might be that since students are not being identified as gifted in Math, growth of advanced students is not meeting expectations. If identification procedures were to improve, students gifted in math would be able to be provided with targeted and appropriate instruction, thus resulting in improved student performance in Math.

Step 7: Identify Responsible Person(s)

In order to clearly define roles and responsibilities within the target/ action steps, AUs should identify responsibilities aligned to the following responsibility assignment matrix. This also helps build collaboration in order to be more system dependent than person dependent.

- **Responsible**- This is the person who will be responsible for doing the work related to the target. This person is responsible for the daily decision making in collaboration with the person who is accountable.
- **Accountable**- This is the person who is ultimately accountable to ensure the work is happening and progressing. This person is responsible for the overall decision making and may not necessarily be responsible for day to day decision making.
- **Consulted**-This is the person or persons who are consulted for their expertise or support. They are not decision makers.
- **Informed**- This is the person or persons who needs to be informed of what is happening but is not involved in decision making or implementation.

Step 8: Identify How to Measure Success

Effectively evaluating the success of an annual plan hinges on having the right tools and data in place from the outset. Without a clear understanding of how progress will be measured, the administrative unit risks flying blind, unable to gauge if their efforts are on track or require adjustments. Before diving into implementation, an Administrative Unit must identify the tools and data they'll use to measure success along the way and at the end of the year. Identifying relevant data points and choosing appropriate tools to track them allows the Administrative Unit to monitor progress, identify areas needing improvement, and ultimately demonstrate the plan's effectiveness to stakeholders.

Step 9: Determine Alignment to district/BOCES priorities

Next, ensure the Gifted Education Annual Plan aligns strategically with existing district/BOCES priorities. Conduct a thorough review to identify areas where the gifted program's goal converges with, directly supports, or reinforces AU-wide initiatives.

Suppose a district prioritizes STEM education and the Annual Plan identifies gifted identification as the major improvement strategy. In this case, the gifted program might aim to partner in the development of more advanced science and math courses to help support students who might excel in these content areas and, through exposure, might demonstrate the need for gifted identification. This convergence strengthens both initiatives.

If no clear alignment exists, don't simply accept a disconnect. Proactively seek opportunities to connect the Gifted Education Annual Plan to other ongoing work, departments, and priorities. For example, Gifted Education can collaborate with the reading department to develop advanced literacy professional development or partner with the technology department to create innovative learning experiences.

When Gifted Education aligns with existing priorities, it showcases its worth and directly increases the potential of meeting the needs of gifted students. It also helps incorporate Gifted Education as part of the broader education system, rather than a silo or stand alone.

Step 10: Connect to the district UIP

Every district is required to develop a UIP, but the how and when can vary. This may require specific considerations for BOCES, multi-districts, and large districts with schools that develop their own targeted UIPs. Please note the following:

- Gifted Education Annual Plans are developed every year regardless of the Administrative Unit UIP submission timeline
- Gifted Education Annual Plans are due April 15th and UIPs are due October 15th
- The Gifted Annual Plan can be a part of the Data Analysis, Target Setting, and/or Action Planning of the UIP since it is an iterative, unified approach to improvement planning.

Below are three scenarios to help see the connections and collaboration between the district UIP and the Gifted Education Annual Plan. The District UIP should continue to include how it connects to the Gifted Annual Plan and/or how gifted students are part of the goals/action steps in the UIP.

- **The Gifted Annual Plan is created with one major improvement strategy and then collaboratively connected to the UIP goals.**
    - An example of this would be an overarching goal around Identification set and outlined in the Gifted Annual Plan. Each district/school determines how to connect and collaborate between the Annual Plan strategies and what is outlined in the UIP. One possible goal for a UIP is to improve math scores, which could easily be connected to the Annual Plan that will increase gifted identification in math. Another UIP may have a goal of increasing belonging (as determined by a student wellness

survey) and this could be connected to equitable identification and belonging from underserved gifted populations.

- **The Gifted Annual Plan is created with multiple improvement strategies and those writing UIPs connect with the strategy that aligns best.**
  - An example would be the Gifted Director identifying 2-3 improvement areas that are determined best next steps (determination could come from the GEM process, surveys, CPP next steps, data, etc.) and those that write UIPs determine which strategy or strategies will connect. The Gifted Director could determine Identification, Engagement, and Personnel are the most needed program element improvement areas. These priority improvement strategy areas are options chosen for connection to the UIP.
- **The Gifted Annual Plan is created with one to three improvement areas that are then specifically targeted to specific schools/districts.** This strategy works best when there is not a deep understanding of gifted by those who develop the UIP and/or very limited Gifted Director time resources (for example, they oversee many districts across a large geographic area).
  - For example, the Gifted Director may determine Programming is an overarching need and there will be specific action steps supporting the implementation of Depth and Complexity (training, support, resources, etc.). This will be provided for all districts/schools regardless of the specifics within their UIP. However, there still needs to be a conversation about effective collaboration practices so goals are unified (or converge with one another) rather than compete with each other.
  - Another example is Identification and the improvement area chosen is ALPs. The Gifted Director could then assign schools or districts to one of these areas depending on how many students they had identified. If they had low or disproportionate identification, that area would be designated as their focus. For other schools/districts with proportionate identification numbers, ALPs would be designated as the focus. Again, collaboration and connection are needed to align the work of everyone in the school district.

Entering Annual Plan into the DMS

<mark>This section will be updated once the Data Management System is active.</mark>

Conclusion

Gifted Annual Plans should also be based on district programming and aligned with local priorities while simultaneously adhering to the requirements of statute and ECEA rule.

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Appendix A

Program Element & Student Performance Challenges

This section will be developed over time using examples from Annual Plan submissions.