

HIGH ABILITY



PROGRAM

MILL CREEK COMMUNITY
SCHOOL CORPORATION



High Ability Handbook

Serving students K-12

ABOUT US: MCCSC



Small Schools, Big Opportunities

We are a small rural school corporation west of Indianapolis. Our central focus is providing and preparing our students for the next big opportunities. We value families and community.



Why Choose us ?

Mill Creek Community School Corporation offers high ability elementary small group instruction, middle school honors courses plus acceleration, and high school honors, AP, and dual credit opportunities.

CADETS

Critical Thinking
Creative Thinking
Collaboration

REACH

Communication
Confidence
Commitment



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Mission

Mill Creek Community School Corporation is dedicated to identifying and developing high ability students through accelerated, rigorous instruction and comprehensive social-emotional support that prepares them to lead, innovate, and excel.

Core Commitments

- **Comprehensive Identification:** MCCSC identifies high ability students with fidelity across all cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, recognizing outstanding performance or potential relative to peers of similar age, experience, or environment.
- **Customized & Challenging Instruction:** We deliver a flexible curriculum within both the classroom and the broader community, designed around an accelerated pace, deeper analytical depth, evaluation, and creative problem-solving.
- **Whole-Child Support:** Beyond academic rigor, our services explicitly address the unique social and emotional needs of high ability learners to ensure well-being and long-term success.
- **Shared Accountability:** In partnership with our community, MCCSC ensures that identified students receive continuous, high-quality services that foster critical thinking and lifelong societal leadership.



Belief Statements

1. High ability students require experiences beyond grade level standards and curriculum which engage them in meaningful and rigorous work, culminating in rich learning experiences.
2. High ability research-based instruction is a fundamental responsibility of the school corporation and should not be considered “extra” or a “privilege.”
3. Classrooms with high ability students contain diverse learners requiring curriculum to be adapted, differentiated, or replaced in order to meet high ability learners’ needs.
4. To provide for high ability students, flexible pacing and groupings must be used to allow for acceleration as appropriate.
5. Personnel directing the educational services for high ability students (high ability coordinator) must be properly trained.
6. The general education program must integrate high ability programming.
7. Appropriately designed resources and programming are necessary to properly support the high ability program.
8. A continuum of programming for high ability students must exist for these students to properly matriculate through our educational system.
9. In order to meet the needs of high ability students, policies for early entrance, grade skipping, ability grouping, and dual enrollment must be created and followed.
10. A counseling/support system must be in place to support high ability students to address their unique background needs, including racial, ethnic, socio-economic status, gender, and career needs.
11. A professional development program will be used to comprehensively prepare educators to work with high ability students.
12. A student identification process/system will be used that is research-based, formalized, comprehensive, and non-discriminatory against any background characteristic of a student, such as race, gender, socio-economic status, behavior, twice exceptionalities (identified as high ability and special needs), etc.



Definition of High Ability

The definition of a High Ability student in Mill Creek Community School Corporation is in direct alignment with the state of Indiana.

“High Ability Student is one who performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests.”

Indiana Code 20-36-1-3

The domains that Mill Creek recognizes and services are Mathematics, Language Arts, and General Intellectual (a student who qualifies in both Mathematics and Language Arts).



Identification Process

Universal screening occurs in grades kindergarten, 2, 3, and 5.

Language Arts

The district utilizes a multi-criteria identification process to determine eligibility for Language Arts High Ability services. Students may qualify through quantitative cognitive testing, quantitative achievement testing, or standardized qualitative measures.

1. Cognitive Assessment (CogAT)

- **Qualification Cutoff:** Students who score at or above the **96th percentile** (national norms) on the **Verbal component** of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) automatically qualify for Language Arts High Ability services.
- **Kindergarten Screening Process:** All Kindergarten students are administered the CogAT Screener. Students scoring at or above the **80th percentile** on the screener advance to take the complete CogAT Post-Screener.

2. Achievement Assessments

- **Kindergarten & Grade 2 (IXL):**
 - Students are assessed using the IDOE-approved IXL achievement assessment.

- To qualify, a student must score at or above the **95th percentile** (based on local norms) across **all three benchmark assessments** within the same academic year.
- *Supplemental Testing:* If additional quantitative data is required to make an eligibility determination, the Iowa Assessments may be administered, subject to district testing availability.
- **Grades 3 & 5 (ILEARN):**
 - Eligibility is determined using the IDOE (Indiana Department of Education)-approved ILEARN achievement test based on state norms.
 - To qualify, a student must score at or above the **95th percentile** across **two of the three checkpoint assessments** within the same academic year.
 - *Supplemental Data:* If additional quantitative data is required, IXL achievement data may be evaluated by the High Ability Identification Committee.

3. Qualitative Assessment

- **Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS):** A standardized SIGS rating scale completed by certified teaching staff with a Language Arts domain score of **126 or above** qualifies a student for Language Arts High Ability services.
- **Additional Committee Review Data:** When quantitative scores fall just below qualification thresholds, the District High Ability Committee may review secondary qualitative evidence, including standardized student work samples, structured Language Arts portfolios, and formal teacher observation logs, to determine final placement.

Math:

The district utilizes a multi-criteria identification process to determine eligibility for Math High Ability services. Students may qualify through quantitative cognitive testing, quantitative achievement testing, or standardized qualitative measures.

1. Cognitive Assessment (CogAT)

- **Qualification Cutoff:** Students who score at or above the **96th percentile** (national norms) on the **Quantitative component or the Quantitative/Nonverbal Composite** of the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) automatically qualify for Math High Ability services.
- **Kindergarten Screening Process:** All Kindergarten students are administered the CogAT Screener. Students scoring at or above the **80th percentile** on the screener advance to take the complete CogAT Post-Screener.

2. Achievement Assessments

- **Kindergarten & Grade 2 (IXL):**
 - Students are assessed using the IDOE-approved IXL achievement assessment.
 - To qualify, a student must score at or above the **95th percentile** (based on local norms) across **all three benchmark assessments** in Math within the same academic year.
 - *Supplemental Testing:* If additional quantitative data is required to make an eligibility determination, the Iowa Assessments may be administered, subject to district testing availability.
- **Grades 3 & 5 (ILEARN):**
 - Eligibility is determined using the IDOE (Indiana Department of Education)-approved ILEARN achievement test based on state norms.

- To qualify, a student must score at or above the **95th percentile** across **two of the three checkpoint assessments** in Math within the same academic year.
- *Supplemental Data*: If additional quantitative data is required, IXL achievement data may be evaluated by the High Ability Identification Committee.

3. Qualitative Assessment

- **Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS)**: A standardized SIGS rating scale completed by certified teaching staff with a Mathematics domain score of **126 or above** qualifies a student for Math High Ability services.
- **Additional Committee Review Data**: When quantitative scores fall just below qualification thresholds, the District High Ability Committee may review secondary qualitative evidence, including standardized student work samples, structured Language Arts portfolios, and formal teacher observation logs, to determine final placement.

4. Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test (IAAT)

- The Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test (IAAT) is used when additional data is needed to determine appropriate placement in Algebra. This assessment is typically administered to students entering or currently in middle school who demonstrate signs of readiness for advanced algebraic instruction.



Program Goals

Mill Creek Community School Corporation will provide services specifically designed for the high ability learner. Our goals and objectives:

Identification

1. With fidelity, identify high ability students utilizing nationally normed potential assessments, achievement assessments, and qualitative data.
2. Offer early screening to 4 year old students in an effort to qualify for early entrance into the kindergarten program.
3. The identification process is aligned with state recommendations.

Services

1. Evaluate the needs of students within the school corporation K-12 in order to determine where enrichment and acceleration are already implemented and where enrichment and acceleration are needed.
2. Allow acceleration in Math at the middle school by utilizing the Orleans Hanna Algebra Readiness test coupled with student motivation and desire.
3. Develop a "watch list" of students who do not qualify, but are very close. Service options for these students may include increased pace curriculum, enrichment pullout, and independent study opportunities.
4. Provide advanced courses which increase rigor with a focus on depth and complexity.

Curriculum and Instruction

1. Provide appropriate professional development for administrators and teachers in high ability teaching strategies and differentiation in the classroom.
2. Implement research-based high ability curriculum K-12.
3. Ensure that the gifted classroom is an extension of the general education classroom with alignment of state standards.

Guidance and Counseling

1. Provide social and emotional education of high ability learners to staff members.
2. Provide research based curriculum of social and emotional education to high ability learners.
3. Provide appropriate counseling support for high ability learners K-12.

Program Effectiveness

1. Conduct data interpretation, especially pre-test and post test data to determine growth within the high ability program.
2. A licensed high ability teacher/coordinator will assist administrators in evaluating high ability services K-12 and that services support local, state, and national guidelines.
3. Evaluate high ability program effectiveness each year by analyzing data in order to prove student growth, identification fidelity, appropriate services, and high ability curriculum usage.



Appeals Process

A family may request an appeal of the appropriate academic placement of a student. Appeals may be considered the last 4 weeks of the school calendar and will conclude on the last day of the school year. If it is decided that additional testing is needed, Mill Creek Community School Corporation will provide alternative test measures in order to collect appropriate data to determine placement. Once all data points are collected, including quantitative and qualitative achievement data, student portfolio, the high ability identification committee will again review the student's profile to determine appropriate placement.



Exit Procedures

High Ability placement is intended to challenge and support advanced learners. However, circumstances such as academic pacing, personal well-being, or changing social-emotional needs may indicate that high ability services are no longer the best fit for a student. Exiting the high ability program may be initiated by either a parent/guardian or school personnel.

Option A: School-Initiated Exit (Intervention Process)

When a school team (teacher, counselor, or administrator) identifies concerns regarding a student's placement, a formal intervention process must occur before an exit decision is made:

1. **Initial Conference:** The school team convenes a meeting with the parent/guardian and student (when age-appropriate) to discuss specific concerns.
2. **Student Support Plan:** A formal Student Support Plan is created, outlining targeted interventions, required accommodations, and measurable success criteria.
3. **Trial Period:** The support plan is implemented for **one full grading period (9 weeks)**. During this window, student progress is monitored and documented.
4. **Final Review:** At the conclusion of the grading period, the team reconvenes:
 - If the student meets the success criteria, high ability placement continues.
 - If interventions fail to resolve the concerns, the student is transitioned out of high ability services at the start of the next grading period.

Option B: Parent-Initiated Immediate Exit

A parent/guardian retains the right to withdraw their child from high ability services at any time without completing a Student Support Plan.

To request an immediate exit, the parent/guardian must submit a signed **High Ability Program Service Decline Form** to the District High Ability Coordinator and school principal. Upon receipt, the student will be reassigned to standard coursework at the next logical academic transition (e.g., the start of the following unit or grading period).

Post-Exit Administrative Status

- **Service Status:** The student is formally exited from high ability instruction, and school counseling staff will update the student's schedule accordingly.
- **State Identification Record:** In accordance with state reporting guidelines, a student's official High Ability identification record remains on file. Withdrawing from active services does not erase prior formal identification, but the student will be marked as "Parent Declined Services" or "Inactive" in the district student information system.
- **Re-Entry:** Exited students wishing to re-enter high ability services in future school years must go through the standard district appeal or re-evaluation process.



Program Services

Mill Creek East Elementary, Mill Creek West Elementary

Elementary:

Mill Creek Community School Corporation maintains a high ability program at both elementary schools which services students in kindergarten through 5th grade. High ability students are grouped according to academic strengths and designations in Language Arts and Math. For this reason, differentiation in the elementary grades is essential. Differentiation allows all students to learn more based on readiness and motivation. Furthermore, grouping students allows our elementary schools' program to fit students' capabilities in order to deeply develop critical and creative thinking skills, thus reducing boredom, frustration, and under-achievement. At times, students and parents can expect an accelerated curriculum which research shows to be the most effective intervention for gifted students. Students can also expect depth and complexity to deepen understanding of grade level standards.

Other opportunities include:

- Exposure to research-based high ability curriculum
- Cluster grouping
- Pull-out classes in which students are taken out of their regular classroom on a daily basis with other high ability students for replacement curriculum and instruction during specific subjects
- Opportunities to participate in Spell Bowl, Math Bowl, and Science Bowl



Cascade Middle School

Middle School:

Where appropriate, Cascade Middle School offers cluster grouping for high ability learners. This allows teachers to compact the curriculum and embed enrichment activities that focus on advanced in-depth content (which may be accelerated), creative development, problem solving, research-based projects, and higher order thinking skills. Students will have the opportunity to begin obtaining high school credits through offered courses in Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Sciences, and Foreign Language Studies.

Other opportunities include:

- Exposure to research-based high ability curriculum
- Cluster grouping
- Advanced courses in math and language arts
- Academic competitions



Cascade High School

High School:

Coursework at the high school level includes honors classes, advanced placement (AP), and dual credit courses. AP courses are instructed using program guidelines which may lead to college credit. Honors versions of classes are available which involve a more in-depth approach to discussions of topics, extensive writing, problem-solving skills, and research on content specific topics.

- **Academic competitions and opportunities**
 - Spell Bowl, Mock Trial, Robotics, ISSMA Music Competition **Note:**
There are other opportunities that are individualized to meet the gifts and needs of students.
- **AP Classes**
 - **Science:** Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science
 - **Mathematics:** Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Economics
 - **Social Studies:** Government, US History, World History
 - **Language Arts:** Language and Composition, Literature and Composition
- **Dual Credit Courses**
 - Project Lead The Way coursework
 - i. Principles of Engineering
 - ii. Introduction Engineering Design
 - iii. Civil Engineering and Architecture
 - Sciences
 - i. Principles of Agriculture (intro, business/management)

- ii. Ag Power and Structure
 - iii. Horticulture Science
 - iv. Greenhouse & Soiless Production
 - v. Anatomy 1 and 2
 - vi. AP Biology: Introduction, Human Biology
- Social Studies
 - i. Introduction to Psychology
 - ii. Economics
 - iii. US Government
- Language
 - i. English 12A and 12B
 - ii. Speech
 - iii. Spanish 3 A/B, 4 A/B
- Careers
 - i. Career Exploration
 - ii. Principles of Teaching
 - iii. Child & Adolescent Development
 - iv. Teaching and Learning
- Greenhouse & Soiless Production
- Anatomy 1 and 2



Guidance and Counseling

High ability students are unique! At Mill Creek Community School Corporation, we are committed to supporting our high ability students academically and within the affective domain. Counseling services are provided at each building that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of students.

Elementary

High ability students are becoming aware of their traits. Counseling services may be requested by the teacher, parent, or student. The following services are implemented:

1. Small group lessons specifically designed for high ability students which encompass some of the following challenges:
 - a. Perfectionism
 - b. Social and emotional strategies
 - c. Boredom in school
 - d. Intense focus
 - e. Asynchronous development
 - f. Self esteem and identity
 - g. Anxiety
 - h. Acceptance of those who are different
2. Individual counseling sessions

3. Provide research based curriculum of social and emotional education to high ability learners.

Guidance and Counseling Cascade Middle School

High ability students at the middle school level experience many transitions socially, academically, and physically. Counseling services are implemented in the following areas:

1. Small and large group counseling.
 - a. A continuation of elementary topics listed above
 - b. Organizational techniques
 - c. Time management
 - d. Study skills
 - e. Motivation
2. Provide research based curriculum of social and emotional education to high ability learners.
3. Students are regularly monitored within the advanced classes for proper placement and are moved to meet the individual needs of each student.

Guidance and Counseling Cascade High School

High ability at the high school level prepares students to enter the work force or college.

1. Individual counseling services.
 - a. A continuation of topics listed above.
 - b. Creation of high school schedules that are appropriate to the needs of challenging content for high ability students.
 - i. AP courses
 - ii. Honors courses
 - c. Understanding Core 40 Academic Honors diploma requirements.
2. Students explore career paths and plan for college and post high school employment opportunities.

3. Cascade High School has teachers who are experienced in teaching HA students. They give in-class guidance and skills to help HA students continue to succeed even when faced with greater rigor involving time pressures and facing the fear of failure.

The CHS Guidance Office team is available for high ability students and parents to access support services throughout the school day. The school counselors speak to students by appropriate classroom lessons. They share the importance of achieving the highest possible grades, course paths, and options available in order to achieve future goals. Follow up discussions are scheduled with grade level parent groups. Career and College Guidance is provided at each grade level from exploring in Grade 9 and advancing to more specific plans by Grade 12. Indiana Career Explorer is a tool often used to update each year to help each student's career goals and college/education needed to reach those goals. Other events such as ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) career testing, Mock Interview Day and Career and College App Day also help students prepare for their future plan after high school graduation.



Professional Development

When appropriate and available, district staff have opportunities to attend conventions, conferences, and workshops which target services and advocate for high ability students.

1. Workshops are available through our partnership with CIESC & WIESC.
2. Attendance of Indiana Association for the Gifted annual conference.
3. Teachers obtaining a high ability license is encouraged.
4. Discussions are held quarterly to focus on high ability challenges and celebrations.
5. Vertical articulation for high ability students discussed and planned. These discussions aid in the training of staff to better understand the needs of high ability students.

Characteristics of a Gifted Child

Although there are many definitions of giftedness, according to the National Association for Gifted Children, gifted children do have many common characteristics. It is important to note; however, that there is a distinction between a child who is bright and does well in school versus a truly gifted child. This chart helps us to distinguish some of those characteristics.

A Bright Child	A Gifted Child
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Has good ideas	Has wild, silly ideas
Works hard	Plays around, yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail; elaborates
Top group	Beyond the group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings, opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	1-2 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes the assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates new designs
Enjoys school	Enjoys learning
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Good memorizer	Good guesser
Is pleased with learning	Is highly self-critical
Enjoys straight-forward, sequential presentation	Thrives on complexity