



**Program for Advanced  
Learners**

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**Program for Advanced Learners**

**Handbook**

**2016—2019**



## Table of Contents

History and Purpose	3
Defining Giftedness	4
Student Identification	6
Levels of Service Approach	9
Appeal Process	10
PAL Roles	11
After PAL	12
Resources for Parents	13

## Notes

## History and Purpose

**The Program for Advanced Learners** (PAL) evolved out of three years of study and planning. It is overseen by the PAL Coordinator and is staffed by a full-time teacher with experience and training in serving academically gifted (AM—math, AR-reading, and AG-math and reading) and intellectually gifted (IG) students.

Because the teaching and learning methods of Expeditionary Learning, which underpins our curriculum for all students, closely parallel the academic approach that research describes as best meeting the needs of advanced learners, many of the components of PAL take place in the regular classroom. All Evergreen students are engaged in projects, literature-based reading, and inquiry-based math and science. Teachers regularly differentiate instruction or employ flexible grouping to address the needs of diverse ability levels. Notwithstanding these opportunities, the faculty and administration recognize that some students need additional challenge in the classroom. PAL exists to meet the needs of these students.

PAL is *not* a traditional academically gifted program in which students are pulled out of their regular classrooms for a specified period each week or placed in academically gifted classes from one year to the next. PAL will provide teachers, students, and families with the resources, rationale, and support to serve the special academic and intellectual needs of students who are especially motivated, intelligent, and high performing. These services will be provided in the regular classroom through differentiation or through student/adult partnerships with the PAL coordinator, another teacher, or a community member. The goal is to match PAL to individual students rather than the students to PAL.

## Defining Giftedness

### North Carolina

#### § 115C-150.5. Academically or intellectually gifted students.

The General Assembly believes the public schools should challenge all students to aim for academic excellence and that academically or intellectually gifted students perform or show the potential to perform at substantially high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment. Academically or intellectually gifted students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual areas, specific academic fields, or in both intellectual areas and specific academic fields. Academically or intellectually gifted students require differentiated educational services beyond those ordinarily provided by the regular educational program. Outstanding abilities are present in students from all cultural groups, across all economic strata, and in all areas of human endeavor. (1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 18.24(f).)

#### National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)

*A gifted person is someone who shows, or has the potential for showing, an exceptional level of performance in one or more areas of expression.*

Some of these abilities are very general and can affect a broad spectrum of the person's life, such as leadership skills or the ability to think creatively. Some are very specific talents and are only evident in particular circumstances, such as a special aptitude in mathematics, science, or music. The term *giftedness* provides a general reference to this spectrum of abilities without being specific or dependent on a single measure or index. It is generally recognized that approximately five percent of the student population, or three million children, in the United States are considered gifted.

A person's giftedness should not be confused with the means by which giftedness is observed or assessed. Parent, teacher, or student recommendations, a high mark on an examination, or a high IQ score are not giftedness; they may be a signal that giftedness exists. Some of these indices of giftedness are more sensitive than others to differences in the person's environment.

## Resources for Parents

### Web

National Association for Gifted Children	<a href="http://nagc.org">nagc.org</a>
North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented	<a href="http://ncagt.org">ncagt.org</a>
Hoagies Gifted Education Page	<a href="http://hoagiesgifted.org">hoagiesgifted.org</a>
SENG: Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted	<a href="http://sengifted.org">sengifted.org</a>
Evergreen PAL Website	<a href="http://evergreenccs.org/pal">evergreenccs.org/pal</a>

### Publications

*Gifted Child Quarterly*

*Parenting for High Potential*

### Books

Calkins, Lucy. *Raising Lifelong Learners*. (ECCS library)

Delisle, Jim & Galbraith, Judy. *The Gifted Kids' Survival Guide: A Teen Handbook*.

Delisle, Jim & Galbraith, Judy. *When Gifted Kids Don't Have All the Answers*.

Olenchak, F. Richard. *They Say My Child's Gifted, Now What?*

Rimm, Silvia. *See Jane Win and How Jane Won*

Treffinger, Donald J., et al. *Talent Development: The Levels of Service Approach*

# After PAL

## Graduating to high school

When a PAL student moves on to high school, he/she retains the designation as a student who needs different challenge. North Carolina uses the terminology of Academically and Intellectually Gifted (AIG) and this is what most public high schools use. AIG will be noted in PowerSchool and on the records forwarded to the high school. A copy of the student's PAL Differentiated Education Plan will also be included in the cumulative file. The history document includes testing information and notes about learning style and how the students learns best.

## Transferring to another school

Similar to graduating, the AIG designation will "travel" with a student moving to another school. Most, but not all, schools recognize this designation and will serve students previously identified. Each school or district serves AIG students according to their own plan. You are encouraged to talk with the new school about their AIG program and how your student will be served.

## Exiting PAL

In some circumstances it may be apparent that PAL is no longer the right fit for a student. At this time a meeting will be scheduled involving the family, the lead teacher, and the PAL coordinator. The focus will be to share the reasoning behind the decision to exit the student from PAL and to come to a consensus on what is best for the student. The exiting process may be initiated by either the family or the PAL coordinator.

## Federal

### From The Rules for the Administration of The Exceptional Children's Education Act (1 CCR 301-8)

- 2220-R-8.00 Gifted and Talented Student Programming
  - 8.01 Definitions
    - 8.01(1) "Gifted and talented children" means those persons between the ages of five and twenty-one whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational needs. Children under five who fit this definition may also be served. Gifted and talented children hereinafter are referred to as students. Gifted and talented students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas:
      - 8.01(1)(a) General or specific intellectual ability.
      - 8.01(2)(b) Specific academic aptitude.
      - 8.01(3)(c) Creative or Productive thinking.
      - 8.01(4)(d) Leadership or human relations abilities.
      - 8.01(5)(e) Visual arts, performing arts, spatial or musical abilities.
      - 8.01(6)(f) Psychomotor abilities.
    - 8.01(2) "Learning-related affective development" means programming in tended to assist gifted and talented students in understanding themselves as gifted learners and the implication of their abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment.

# Identification—Looking for Giftedness: New Ways of Seeing

## Changing Understanding of Intelligence

### Old:

**Inherited**—given at birth

**Stable**—fixed

**Unitary**—one aspect, unidimensional

Many models of intelligence exist: Robert Sternberg from Yale (3 intelligences), Howard Gardner from Harvard (8-10 intelligences), J.P. Guilford Structure of the Intellect (120 intelligences), and several more. The understanding of intelligence has changed over time; understanding of giftedness has changed along with it.

### **Bucket Analogy**

Intelligence is the dynamic relationship between the size of the bucket (capacity) and filling the bucket (experience).

Some kindergarten students come to school with middle size bucket brimming over with experiences. Other kids come with larger buckets with less experiences in their bucket. Those middle size buckets look more intelligent.

*Looking for Giftedness: A New Way of Seeing*—video by Dr. Mary Ruth Coleman, UNC Chapel Hill

In other words, a student with average ability and many experiences outside of school—travel, summer camps, exposure to literature—may be perceived as more intelligent than a student with high ability but limited experiences.

### New:

**Dynamic**—combination of capacity and experiences

**Developmental**—emerges depending on experiences

**Multifaceted**—multidimensional

## PAL Roles

**PAL Teacher**— The PAL teacher works directly with students and faculty to meet the needs of advanced learners. The PAL teacher works directly with students in Levels of Service III and IV. This will primarily be small group instruction (pull-out and push-in) and facilitating individual projects. This may be a pull-out advanced mathematics or reading groups that enrich the regular curriculum. The PAL teacher works with classroom teachers to meet the needs of students in Levels of Service II and III. This includes regular co-planning for differentiated lessons, content, and products, modeling instructional and management strategies. The PAL teacher communicates the services provided to individual students to parents on a regular basis during PAL activities and during the annual review of the PAL Differentiated Education Plan (DEP). Facilitating extracurricular activities such as Odyssey of the Mind and the Spelling Contest is also part of the PAL teacher's role.

**Coordinator**—The coordinator manages the identification process and communicates this information to teachers and parents. The coordinator provides professional development to classroom teachers to increase their knowledge of the learning styles of PAL students and best practices to meet their unique needs. Additionally, PAL and Evergreen offer parent education opportunities that are beneficial in establishing a positive relationship with all stakeholders. An overview of the program for all Evergreen families and an orientation for newly identified students are two recurring parent education opportunities.

**Teachers**— Since the classroom teacher has the greatest contact with PAL students, he or she directly serves students' needs throughout the day. The classroom teacher collaborates with the PAL coordinator to plan and deliver lessons that will challenge learners at Levels II & III. The classroom teacher communicates student progress through the trimester progress reports.

**Parents**—Being a positive advocate is a key part of supporting an advanced learner's education. A positive advocate maintains communication about a student's progress and well-being with both the PAL coordinator and the classroom teacher. PAL and Evergreen offer parent education opportunities and are beneficial in establishing a positive relationship with all stakeholders. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend parent education offerings throughout the year.

**Students**— PAL students are at the center of the program. Along with striving to reach their full potential, a student's role is to learn how to effectively self-advocate and to positively communicate with parents, teachers, and the PAL coordinator.

## PAL Appeal Process

In the event a parent disagrees with the identification process or services being provided for their child, they should follow the following grievance process: 1) Submit a written description of their view to the PAL coordinator who will then meet with administration 2) A meeting with the family, coordinator, administrator, and lead teacher will be scheduled to hear the grievance 3) Based on that meeting a decision on the student's eligibility will be determined 4) If the parent is still not satisfied, a mediator can be brought in to assist in making a determination.

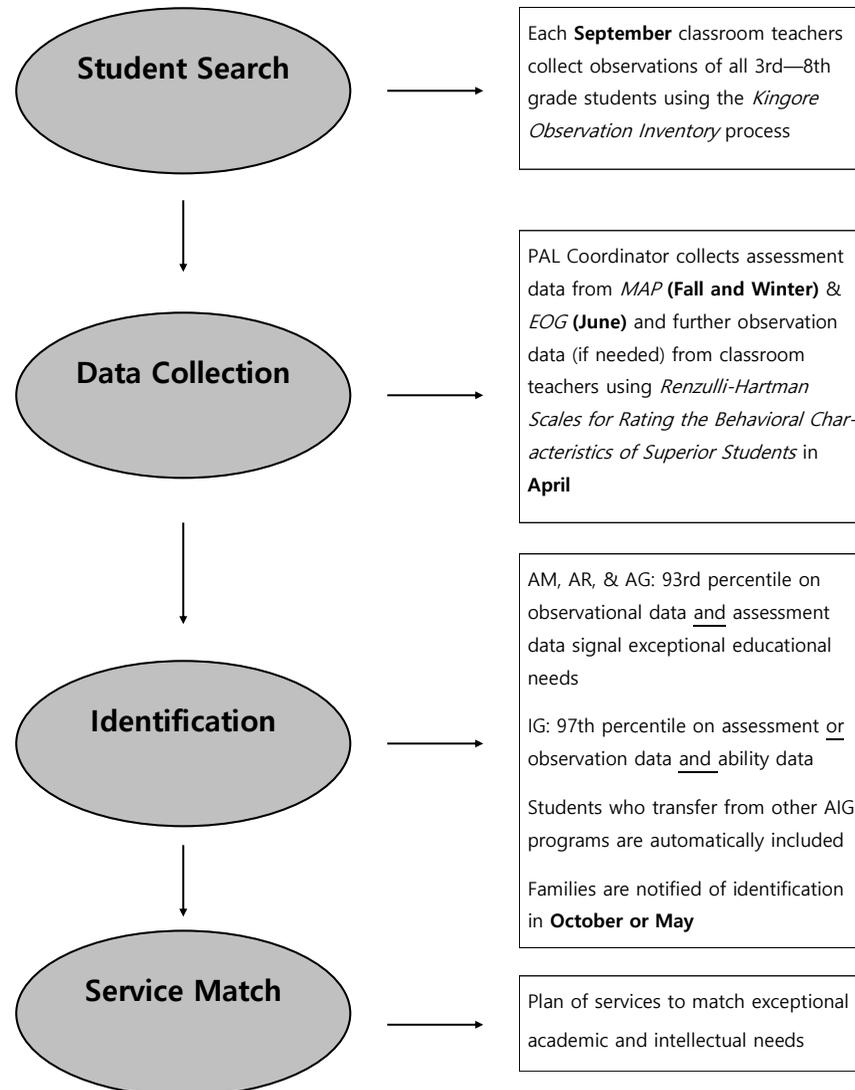
\* As per Article 9b - § 115C-150.8. Review of Disagreements.

In the event that the procedure developed under G.S. 115C-150.7(b)(7) fails to resolve a disagreement, the parent or guardian may file a petition for a contested case hearing under Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. The scope of review shall be limited to (i) whether the local school administrative unit improperly failed to identify the child as an academically or intellectually gifted student, or (ii) whether the local plan developed under G.S. 115C-150.7 has been implemented appropriately with regard to the child. Following the hearing, the administrative law judge shall make a decision that contains findings of fact and conclusions of law. Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes, the decision of the administrative law judge becomes final, is binding on the parties, and is not subject to further review under Article 4 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes. (1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, s. 18.24(f).)

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

# Student Search & Identification Process

The identification process at Evergreen for academically gifted and intellectually gifted students includes both observational and assessment data in recognition of the many types of advanced learners. ECCS teachers operate as talent spotters and academic strengths are identified through state and national testing.



# Levels of Service Approach

During the planning year for the Program for Advanced Learners the decision was made to use Donald Treffinger's *Levels of Service Approach* as a model for the delivery of PAL services to Evergreen students. Its emphasis on talent identification and providing a range of services fits well with the school's mission to prepare students for "successful lifelong learning". The *Levels of Service Approach* aims to provide appropriate services to 4 "levels" of students; All, Many, Some, and Few. The percentiles refer to the qualifying MAP or EOG scores and are guidelines for the level of services students will receive.

## Level I: All Students

- ECCS Expeditionary Learning curriculum
- Differentiated Instruction—flexible grouping
- Math and reading groups

## Level II: Many Students (93rd to 96th percentiles– beginning benchmark for formal ID)

*PAL services delivered by regular classroom teacher. In consultation with PAL teacher.*

- Differentiated Instruction—tiered assignments & menus
- Math, spelling, and expedition products
- Spelling Contest

## Level III: Some Students (95th to 99th percentiles)

*PAL services delivered by regular classroom teacher and PAL coordinator.*

- Differentiated Instruction—curriculum compacting
- Pre-testing followed by alternative assignments
- Push-in/Pull-out groups
- "Fast finisher" activities

## Level IV: Few Students (97th—99th percentiles)

*PAL services delivered by PAL coordinator.*

- Differentiated Instruction—individual in-depth studies
- Grade skipping

For more information on Levels of Service see *The Talent Development Planning Handbook, Designing Inclusive Gifted Programs* by Treffinger, Young, Nassab, Selby & Wittig (2008)