In the following report, Hanover Research reviews the literature related to high achieving dropout students. Specifically, the report addresses motivations for high achieving student dropouts and strategies to prevent dropouts among this population. The report also profiles three school districts’ strategies for engaging academically advanced students.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Despite recent progress in increasing high school graduation rates, many schools and districts still struggle to retain students at risk of dropping out.\(^1\) This is particularly true of high achieving students, who experts note are often overlooked when discussing the issue of dropouts. Despite this issue, there is limited research on the best practices strategies employed by school districts to engage and retain high achieving students. This report provides a review of the literature related to high achieving student dropouts, and specifically seeks to identify reasons for dropping out among academically gifted students, as well as presents several dropout prevention strategies designed to promote engagement among academically advanced students. The report comprises two sections:

- **Section I: High Achievers and School Dropout** summarizes the literature related traditional and gifted dropouts and identifies strategies designed to engage and retain gifted and high achieving students.
- **Section II: School District Profiles** includes detailed profiles that describe the strategies used by three districts to support engagement among academically gifted students.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Although they share some similar characteristics, gifted and non-gifted learners may drop out of school for different reasons.** Both high-achieving students and their peers are found to exhibit low levels of academic and social engagement in school prior to dropping out. However, gifted students typically cite a lack of challenging coursework as one of the factors in their decision to drop out of school. In addition, gifted learners who drop out are nearly three times as likely as their non-gifted peers to leave school to pursue a college diploma or GED.

- **Accelerated learning, delivered either through self-contained accelerated learning centers or as a program delivered within a traditional school, is a promising approach to reducing gifted student dropouts.** Experts in the field suggest that accelerated learning — a course of study that extends the curriculum and quickens the instructional pacing — is an effective strategy for engaging high achieving learners. Such programs may be delivered through a stand-alone program reserved for gifted students or may be implemented through pull-out programs and grade skipping.

- **The literature emphasizes the importance of providing sufficiently challenging high school coursework to keep high achieving students motivated and engaged.** Research suggests that one of the most prevalent reasons for gifted student

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dropouts is lack of academic engagement due to an absence of challenging coursework. As a result, experts assert that districts should strive to provide a wide array of rigorous courses to their students in the form of honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual enrollment. These courses may also incorporate experiential or project-based learning into the curricula in order to stimulate students’ creative thinking and make course content relevant to their lives.

- **Experts suggest that gifted learners require unique support from school counselors to foster academic and social engagement.** The literature indicates that gifted students are challenged by issues such as boredom, frustration, self-esteem, self-control, creativity, and social interactions at school. However, school counselors may not be adequately prepared to recognize and address these issues in high achieving students. Experts recommend that districts provide school counselors with the professional development they need to support the affective challenges unique to gifted learners.

- **The districts profiled in this report engage high achieving students through accelerated learning programs and rigorous course offerings.** All three districts offer a gifted and talented program, which accelerates learning and groups academically advanced students together to create a peer group. In addition, they offer dual and articulated credit programs that allow high school students to take college-level courses for college and high school credit. Some of the districts offer these opportunities tuition-free, further incentivizing retention of high achieving students.
SECTION I: HIGH ACHIEVERS AND SCHOOL DROPOUT

In recent years, implementation of widespread accountability policies at the state and federal level has made increasing the graduation rate a priority for public school districts. As a result, the national high school graduation rate has begun to increase. According to data from the Department of Education (ED), graduation rates reached a record high in the 2012-2013 school year, with 81 percent of American students graduating from high school.\(^2\) Although there have been drastic improvements at the national level, many districts continue to work towards reducing the number of students who drop out of school early.\(^3\)

According to the Center for Public Education, districts have “compelling moral, social, and economic reasons” to decrease dropout rates among their students.\(^4\) The literature indicates that high school dropouts have less earning potential than they did in previous decades and, as a result, students who leave school prematurely are more likely to face long-term economic hardship. As opposed to addressing the issue of traditional scenarios of student dropouts, districts are challenged with engaging and retaining high achieving students interested in dropping out of high school to pursue postsecondary education or employment.

This section of the report provides an overview of the research related to high achieving dropouts, with a specific focus on identifying motivating factors for dropping out and determining strategies to engage these learners.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL DROPOUTS

In an effort to increase graduation rates, districts tend to focus resources on those students who research shows are more likely to leave school early. To this end, researchers have worked to develop indicators and student risk factors that are historically associated with an increased risk of dropping out. These include:\(^5\)

- **Student demographics:** Particular demographic subsets of the student population are more likely to drop out than their peers. Low-income students, minority students, English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and students with high mobility are at greater risk for dropping out of school than their peers.

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\(^{2}\) Ibid.


\(^{5}\) Bulleted points adapted from: Ibid.
Familial factors: Familial factors have also been shown to influence students’ risk of dropout. Learners raised in a single parent household or in a household that does not adequately support education are more likely to drop out than their peers. Similarly, students who have family members (e.g., parents, siblings) who dropped out of school are more prone to leaving school prematurely.

Responsibilities outside of school: Students who have adult responsibilities such as marriage, children, and employment are more disposed to dropping out of school early.

Educational performance and engagement: Students who leave school tend to struggle in their education and receive low grades, are held back one or more grade levels, or fall behind on their coursework. Levels of student engagement are also predictors of dropout risk. Low classroom engagement, absenteeism, poor classroom behavior, and relationship issues are all correlated with lower graduation rates.

While a number of studies have focused on the characteristics of traditional dropout students, the needs of gifted or high achieving students are often overlooked in the larger conversation regarding school dropouts. This may be due to the fact that appraisals of the extent of the dropout rate among academically advanced students vary considerably. For example, while some experts estimate that approximately 18 percent of gifted students drop out of school, others assert that dropout is “relatively uncommon among academically gifted learners.” Although there is disagreement about the prevalence of early dropout among gifted learners, a number of studies have attempted to determine the characteristics of gifted learners that drop out of school early.

In 2002, Joseph Renzulli and Sunghee Park published a study that used data from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) to determine gifted students’ reasons for dropping out and identify characteristics of gifted high school dropouts. The researchers found that the indicators of high achiever dropout are similar to those of traditional dropouts. According to the results of the study, the following are gifted student subgroups with a higher likelihood of dropping out:

Gifted students from low SES families

- Racial minority students, especially Hispanic and Native Americans
- Gifted students whose parents have low levels of education
- Students who participated less in extracurricular activities
- Gifted students who have low educational aspirations
- Gifted students who have a child or are expecting a child

As suggested above, the research indicates that many of the characteristics that correlate with school dropout among non-gifted students also correlate to dropout among academically gifted students. Indeed, both groups of students often grapple with instability, respect for authority, nonconformity, family problems, and behavioral challenges. However, some researchers suggest that there are meaningful differences between high achieving and traditional student dropouts:

- Gifted dropouts tend to come from a higher socioeconomic level, have more stable families, and speak standard English as their primary language.
- Gifted dropouts appear to be going through an affective and cognitive phase of identity development, while non-gifted dropouts are more likely to be escaping from what they perceive to be a hostile school environment.

REASONS HIGH ACHIEVERS AND GIFTED LEARNERS DROP OUT

The extant literature identifies issues of academic and social engagement in school as primary reasons why high achieving students drop out. Before discussing the literature more extensively, it is important to note that the majority of studies relevant to this research focus on gifted and talented students in particular, and do not often focus on the broader category of high achieving students. Nevertheless, this information provides useful insight into the potential causes of academically high achieving students dropping out of school.

Early analyses on gifted student engagement and dropout point to low motivation and negative attitudes towards school as common features of students who decided to leave school. Sadowski (1987) conducted in-depth interviews with five gifted high school dropouts, their parents, and their teachers, and determined that the following characteristics were common to students who dropped out of school:

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Gifted dropouts exhibited a lack of interest and motivation in high school.

There was evidence of a negative and rebellious attitude towards school and authority.

There was evidence of an incomplete or inappropriate gifted curriculum in high school.

Gifted dropouts developed poor peer relationships and exhibited poor social adjustment.

There was evidence of lack of counseling in high school and inadequate communication between the school and the home.

More recent studies of gifted dropouts reinforce these findings. A 2002 longitudinal study conducted by Renzulli and Park determined that gifted students that drop out of school typically exhibit low academic performance, engagement, and motivation. They also found that these students left school because they “were failing school, didn’t like school, got a job, or were pregnant.” Notably, Renzulli and Park’s analysis found that many academically gifted students who left school prematurely did not have any plans to return to school.

A 2006 study by Michael Matthews also examined longitudinal data to determine characteristics of gifted dropouts, but came to slightly different conclusions. The study examined data for approximately 8,000 students who were enrolled in Duke University’s Talent Identification Program. To qualify for the program, learners must score at or above the 95th percentile on a standardized test of academic ability. Based on these data, the researcher identified attendance issues as the most frequently stated cause of gifted student dropout. However, he noted that “gifted students in this sample were nearly three times as likely as other students to drop out to attend a community college GED or other educational program.” This suggests that gifted students may indeed leave school for alternative and potentially more challenging education opportunities.

A subsequent qualitative analysis conducted by Matthews reiterates and further sheds light on the 2006 findings. In this study, Matthews conducted interviews with six gifted individuals who left high school before receiving their diploma in an attempt to understand the unique reasons why gifted learners choose to leave school. Matthews noted several salient themes across responses:

- A number of gifted students who dropped out of school cited difficulty in mathematics specifically. However, they noted that all other subjects were not challenging to them.
- Many interviewees reported having very few close friends in high school, claiming that their peers were more interested in social interaction than academic performance.

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14 Ibid., p. v.
The interviews also suggested that the structure of interviewees’ high schools may be partially responsibility for their decision to drop out. Many interviewees asserted that their classes were “more of the same” and did not teach them anything new, while others expressed disappointment at the discontinuation of their gifted programs during the transition from middle to high school. The loss of advanced programming options resulted in dissatisfaction in their high school experience.

STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE HIGH ACHIEVERS

Research related to student dropouts focuses primarily on identifying students at risk of dropping out as opposed to finding effective strategies for keeping high achieving learners engaged. Although there are a number of recommendations cited in the literature specifically targeting academically advanced students, several sources argue that strategies for reducing dropout rates among the general population may also be effective for high achievers. The following are recommended strategies designed to better engage gifted and high achieving students and, consequently, prevent dropout among this subset of the student population.

ACCELERATED LEARNING CENTERS

Joseph Renzulli postulates that some students “may need or prefer an accelerated program,” and research shows that there are numerous benefits associated with acceleration for gifted and high achieving students. Accelerated learning centers “take what is usually reserved for gifted and talented children and share it with all students.” They typically take the form of a school-wide program designed to increase student learning expectations, promote engagement, and prevent student dropout. Within accelerated learning centers, all students are held to high expectations and are given opportunities for collaboration. According to National Dropout Prevention Center, there is empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of accelerated learning centers as a program model that engages students in elementary school through high school.

The main goal of an accelerated learning center is to provide all students with the engaging education necessary to promote creativity and high achievement. Therefore, the dropout risk factors targeted by accelerated learning centers are low academic and social engagement. According to the Accelerated Schools PLUS project, located at the University of Nevada – Las Vegas, the program is designed to promote the following among participating students:

21 Ibid.
Involvement with positive peer activities
- Social competencies
- Problem-solving skills
- High expectations by community, family, school, and self

Program evaluations of accelerated learning centers indicate that students who are enrolled in such programs experience improved cognitive skills and more positive attitudes toward learning. Accelerated learning centers also have a positive impact on parental involvement and school climate.23

As an example, San Marcos High School’s Accelerated Academic Program for Leadership and Enrichment (AAPLE) in Santa Barbara, CA, provides insight into the structure of accelerated learning centers. The four-year high school program concentrates on three primary areas of education related to college entrance and post-secondary success:24
- Rigorous academic coursework
- Enrichment and extracurricular accomplishment
- Strategic focus on entrance examinations

The application process to APPLE is highly selective and the program currently enrolls 132 students across grades 9-12. To ensure diversity in the admission process, AAPLE “seeks to maintain the broadest possible admission basis.”25 The rigorous course of study at APPLE includes honors, Advanced Placement (AP), and college-level coursework. Students’ schedules include an “academic focus block” where they can take advanced courses at community colleges or at the University of California – Santa Barbara. In addition to academic rigor, the program also focuses on community involvement and personal enrichment activities.

Students enrolled in AAPLE are encouraged to take part in their school and community through extracurricular options, such as field trips and study abroad. The program also attempts to incorporate leadership responsibilities into the curriculum so that students develop the life skills necessary to be college and career ready. In addition, the program places a significant emphasis on preparing students for the exams associated with college entrance and post-secondary success, including the PSAT, AP exams, and state standardized tests.26

While the implementation of a school-wide accelerated learning center may be successful, it is not the only approach to promoting engagement among high achieving student

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23 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
populations. In fact, a number of additional sources recommend that districts consider adopting a modified acceleration program that appropriately challenges high achievers to stay motivated and engaged. An acceleration program, on a smaller scale, can be achieved through grade skipping or content acceleration in particular classrooms.

**ADVANCED CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

A number of sources advise districts to provide sufficiently challenging curricula appropriate for academically advanced students. Research indicates that the provision of rigorous coursework increases gifted student engagement and may therefore improve retention among these students. According to Hansen and Toso, districts should offer above-grade-level material for gifted students to make their instruction “hard and engaging.” In traditional classroom settings, it is advised that teachers appropriately differentiate instruction through small groups organized by student interests and proficiency levels. Moreover, experts suggest that teachers “compact, accelerate, and deepen basic instruction” to suit the advanced proficiency of gifted learners.

Instructional strategies cited in the literature as effective at improving engagement among gifted students include the following:

- Hands-on learning opportunities
- Curriculum tailored to students’ interests
- Instruction that appeals to students’ individual learning styles
- Opportunities for students to choose their activities
- Individual education plans
- Pull-out programs

In order to increase the rigor of curriculum and instruction for students who are academically gifted, many districts offer advanced coursework, more specialized courses, or gifted student clusters. Districts also often offer opportunities for dual enrollment courses or other programs that allow students to earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. Especially considering that high achieving students may drop out of high school to pursue more advanced educational opportunities, these dual enrollment programs are particularly beneficial in allowing students to remain in high school while broadening their coursework and preparing them for their postsecondary plans.

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STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

To improve engagement among gifted and high achieving learners, schools should provide appropriate student support services to meet the specific needs of these students. Research indicates that gifted students often suffer from a variety of personal issues that may be addressed through the provision of proper in-school support services. For example, profiles of gifted students developed by Betts and Neihart (1988) specify that academically gifted students often report problems related to boredom, frustration, self-esteem, self-control, creativity, and social interactions that are not necessarily an issue for their non-gifted peers.30

Academically advanced students have “unique personal, social, and academic characteristics that distinguish them from their non-gifted peers.”31 Thus, the provision of specialized support services is recognized as an effective approach to maximizing the academic success of gifted students. According to Karen Elijah, the majority of school counselors are unfamiliar with the needs of gifted learners and as a result are unable to provide them with the support they need. In fact, many school counselors believe that high ability students do not require their support services because “they are smart enough to figure things out for themselves.”32

Nancy Robinson further identifies and describes some specific challenges gifted and high achieving students may face that other students do not, presented in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Challenges Typically Faced by Gifted Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF DIFFICULTY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF RELEVANT CHALLENGES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pace of Learning</td>
<td>A school setting poorly matched to the level and pace of their learning—typically, ordinary classes that cover old ground, move too slowly, and fail to provide the challenge and satisfaction of mastering something new. Among other things, such settings create relentless, low-level feelings of irritation even in the kindest-hearted students that drain energy that should be directed at growing and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Issues</td>
<td>Bright students often feel that something is wrong with them if they are unlike their classmates—typically, for example, they are less interested in spending time at the mall and more interested in talking about a great book they’ve discovered or playing a musical instrument. Far too often—beginning in grade school—they try desperately to be just like everyone else and wonder why they feel so disconnected from themselves. Those who are also “different” for reasons of appearance, learning disability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation have an extra burden to deal with.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://gcq.sagepub.com/content/32/2/248.short
32 Ibid., p. 4.
Because gifted children are often somewhat more mature than their age mates, they may be impatient for the next step – ready for deeper friendships, older friends, more independence, the next grade, even boy-girl relationships. They are “out of sync.”

Especially because of meeting too few genuine challenges that match their interests and vision, gifted children may be especially prone to underachievement. They may seem “lazy,” they may procrastinate, they may simply turn off.

Not only may students feel confused about their choices, but they may take on too many activities – too many AP classes, team sports, drama clubs, math competitions, yearbook, community projects – and rob themselves of sleep, leisure, family time, and the satisfaction of doing their best at something they love.

Because [gifted students] are used to doing so well academically, the occasional B [or C] can be very unsettling and cause them to conclude that they’re not so smart, after all.

Because gifted students’ support needs are often overlooked, it is recommended that districts increase the level of information available to school counselors regarding the characteristics, social-emotional development, and guidance needs of these students. Experts also suggest that districts encourage employee participation in conferences, seminars, or workshops that provide information about the unique needs of gifted students or present effective practices for supporting high ability students.

In regards to specific programming options, schools should develop support programs for gifted and high achieving students that address the following areas:

- College and career information
- Post-secondary planning
- Non-traditional study skills
- Issues of low self-esteem
- Problems with communication skills

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SECTION II: SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILES

This section of the report presents detailed profiles of three school districts:

- Edmonds School District (Washington)
- Northshore School District (Washington)
- Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (Texas)

While these districts do not have any particular dropout prevention strategies in place to target academically advanced students, they do implement programs designed to engage and retain academically gifted learners. The profiles in this section describe core components of these strategies.

EDMONDS SCHOOL DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

Edmonds School District (Edmonds) is located outside of Seattle and serves a population of roughly 20,000 students. Although Edmonds does not directly focus on high achieving students in their dropout prevention efforts, the district provides a number of alternative education programs designed to promote student engagement among academically gifted students.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL-LEVEL PROGRAMS FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS

HIGHLY CAPABLE PROGRAM

The district evaluates students for admission to the Highly Capable (Hi-Cap) program, which provides tailored instruction to meet the needs of students who are high achieving or gifted. Edmonds students are eligible for the Hi-Cap program if they demonstrate advanced cognitive abilities, high levels of academic achievement, and/or particularly creative behavior. In order to determine students’ eligibility, Edmonds uses specific criteria that are set by the State of Washington and administers the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT 6).

High school students in the highly capable program are offered several advanced options. Students who participate in the Gifted program in middle school may attend Edmonds-Woodway High School, which offers full-time Honors courses in grades 9 and 10, and the IB Diploma Program in grades 11 and 12. Students are only admitted to this school in grade 9. Similarly, these students may apply to the STEM program at another district high school, with admission only allowed in grade 9.

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Students wishing to attend their traditional high school may complete available Honors courses in grades 9 and 10, and AP courses in grades 11 and 12. School counselors are responsible for ensuring that Gifted students receive appropriate course assignments.  

**CONTRACTED LEARNING FOR INDIVIDUAL PACING**

Edmonds also offers a program called Contracted Learning for Individual Pacing (CLIP), which is a self-directed independent learning option for students. The CLIP program provides an opportunity for students to earn credits at an accelerated pace to either make up credits or work towards an early graduation. Within Edmonds, priority for CLIP is given to junior and senior student in high school, and all students who enroll are responsible for their attendance and associated course requirements.

Edmonds also offers an online learning option for students who are enrolled in the district, which is separate from the CLIP program.

**SCRIBNER LAKE HIGH SCHOOL**

Scribner Lake High School is an alternative school of choice for high school students. The program serves approximately 250 students in Grades 9 through 12 and is specifically tailored to students who benefit from increased experiential learning, small class sizes, individualized attention, and frequent progress monitoring. To be considered for admission, students must participate in an application process consisting of an information session, written application, and interview.

The program offers a flexible course schedule and a variety of specialized education programs. These include an entry program offered to all students during their first months of high school that enhances study, time management, and learning skills. In addition, the school offers mini courses, expeditionary learning, and competency-based credit recovery courses.

**POST-SECONDARY AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

As a supplementary post-secondary option for students, Edmonds provides a number of options through which high school students can receive college credit. The Running Start program, available to juniors and seniors in high school, allows learners to attend community college tuition free. The program is designed for students who are academically prepared for college-level coursework and allows students to enroll in community college courses.

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40 “School of Choice.” Scribner Lake High School. http://www.edmonds.wednet.edu/Page/8940
either full- or part-time. The courses that students take through Running Start count towards high school graduation, as well as towards their future college degree.\textsuperscript{42}

The College in the High School program similarly allows students to earn college and high school credit simultaneously, but courses are offered at the high school site and are provided at a reduced tuition rate.\textsuperscript{43} The program is available to all students at several of the district’s high schools.

Finally, Edmonds students have access to the Lake Washington Technical Academy, which is a regional technical high school. Edmonds allows high school students to enroll in job-training coursework full-time at Lake Washington Technical Academy in conjunction with their regular high school classes. The district also offers a JOB CORP program that permits students to enroll in a variety of vocational education classes that align to students’ interests. The JOB CORP program is available for students ages 16 to 24 and gives enrollees the opportunity to earn money for their personal expenses during training. Notably, JOB CORP is intensive and students who participate in the program complete job-training classes full-time, in addition to some high school courses.\textsuperscript{44}

\textbf{NORTHSHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT, WASHINGTON}

Northshore School District (Northshore) is also located outside of Seattle, Washington, and enrolls approximately 20,000 students.\textsuperscript{45} Although Northshore does not offer dropout prevention programs specifically targeted to high achieving students, the district recently instituted a performance measure designed to increase the percentage of students enrolled in rigorous coursework throughout the district. In 2011, Northshore was placed on the AP Achievement list for increasing the number of students who take AP classes while maintaining the proportion of students who score at least a 3 or higher on the associated AP tests.\textsuperscript{46} This suggests that the district is engaging increasing numbers of students in academically challenging coursework.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} “Alternative Education Programs.” Edmonds School District. http://edmonds.wednet.edu/Domain/113
ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL-LEVEL PROGRAMS FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS

Within Northshore, high school students have the opportunity to take advanced coursework through AP courses and IB program offerings. In fact, during recent years, Northshore has actively tried to increase the number of AP course offerings available to better appeal to students’ interest areas and increase enrollment in AP classes.\textsuperscript{47} Through a combination of honors, AP, and IB courses, students have the option to complete an accelerated course alignment beginning in Grade 7 (Figure 2.1.)

Figure 2.1: Northshore School District Accelerated Course Alignment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School: Challenge English (7 and 8)</th>
<th>Grade 9: Pre-AP/IB English</th>
<th>Grade 10: Pre-AP/IB English</th>
<th>Grade 11: AP/IB English</th>
<th>Grade 12: AP/IB English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle School: Challenge US History</td>
<td>Grade 9: Pre-AP/IB History</td>
<td>Grade 10: AP/IB History</td>
<td>Grade 11: AP/IB History</td>
<td>Grade 12: AP/IB History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School: Challenge Math 7, Algebra</td>
<td>Grade 9: Geometry</td>
<td>Grade 10: Algebra II/Trigonometry</td>
<td>Grade 11: AP/IB/CHS Pre-Calculus</td>
<td>Grade 12: AP/IB Calculus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northshore School District\textsuperscript{48}

The district also provides a Secondary Summer Academy where students can take accelerated classes at a district high school during the summer break.\textsuperscript{49}

In addition, Northshore maintains a Hi-Cap program designed for gifted and high achieving students. Students who demonstrate eligibility based on test scores (i.e., CogAt 7, Iowa Test of Basic Skills) and/or a review of their performance history are invited to participate. Once enrolled in the Hi-Cap program, learners receive specialized instruction either in a self-contained learning environment or within their neighborhood school.\textsuperscript{50} In both settings, services provided to highly capable students include:\textsuperscript{51}

- Clustering identified students in a classroom to provide a peer group
- Adjusting pacing, reducing review and repetition, curriculum compacting

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} “Grades 2-8.” Northshore School District. http://wwwnew.nsd.org/Page/21317
Enhanced/enriched content or curriculum
- Differentiation of curriculum and instruction
- Extending content to include rigorous problems or projects

**POST-SECONDARY AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Northshore also implements a number of dual credit options designed to allow students to complete college-level coursework in high school that counts towards both their high school diploma and their postsecondary degree. These include:

- The **Running Start** program, which allows eligible high school students to enroll in community colleges and technical colleges while attending high school. Advanced students enroll in college-level classes that are paid for by the district, and the credits they complete count toward their high school graduation and their future post-secondary degree.52

- **UW in the High School** allows students to complete college-level coursework in their high schools. Though the courses are taught at the high school by district teachers, “curriculum, activities, texts, tests, and grading scales” are all developed by the University of Washington.53

- The **Tech Prep** program allows students to prepare for a technical degree in high school. Students who complete qualifying high school courses and receive a minimum of a 3.0 in each course earn both high school credit and credit towards their technical degree.54

**LAMAR CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT, TEXAS**

Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (Lamar CISD) is located outside of Houston, Texas and serves approximately 28,000 students.55 In 2013, every eligible campus in the district achieved the highest possible ranking from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) based on students’ performance on state standardized tests, and the majority of schools received Distinction Designations.56

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**ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL-LEVEL PROGRAMS FOR HIGH ACHIEVERS**

According to the Lamar CISD website, the district’s philosophy on advanced learners is to provide every student with the opportunity to “advance academically as far as his/her ability, motivation, and effort can take him/her.” To ensure that instruction aligns with gifted students’ potential, the district offers a Gifted and Talented (G/T) program to identify advanced learners and to promote engagement by providing students with the appropriate classroom instruction. Students are identified for G/T services if they demonstrate high intellectual performance or excel in a specific academic area of study. Figure 2.2 presents the operating principles of Lamar CISD’s G/T program.

![Figure 2.2: Principles of a Differentiated Curriculum for the Gifted/Talented](image)

- Present content that is related to broad-based issues, themes, or problems.
- Integrate multiple disciplines into the area of study.
- Present comprehensive, related, and mutually reinforcing experiences within an area of study.
- Allow for the in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within the area of study.
- Develop independent or self-directed study skills.
- Develop productive, complex, abstract, and/or higher level thinking skills.
- Focus on open-ended tasks.
- Develop research skills and methods.
- Encourage the development of products that challenge existing ideas and produce “new” ideas.
- Encourage the development of products that use new techniques, materials, and forms.
- Encourage the development of self-understanding, e.g., recognizing and using one’s abilities, becoming self-directed, and appreciating likenesses and/or differences between oneself and others.
- Evaluate student outcomes by using appropriate and specific criteria through self-appraisal and criterion referenced and/or standardized instruments.
- Integrate basic skills and higher level thinking skills into the curriculum.

Source: Lamar CISD

At the secondary level, students in the G/T Program are primarily served through advanced coursework, such as Pre-AP or AP courses. In fact, at the high school level, all G/T identified students are required to take at least one Pre-AP or AP course each year.

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58 Ibid.
POST-SECONDARY AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

In addition to the advanced coursework options, Lamar CISD also offers CTE programs of study. The purpose of the CTE program within Lamar CISD is to provide students with hands-on learning experiences that prepare them for post-secondary career opportunities. CTE students have the option to enroll in both articulated credit courses and dual credit courses. Articulated credit courses allow students to take high school courses that will earn them college credit after graduation, while dual credit courses allow students to earn high school credit and college credit simultaneously.

There are a variety of career clusters available in LCISD including: Architecture and Construction, Information Technology, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

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http://www.lcisd.org/departments/academics/cte

63 “Earn College Credits.” Lamar Consolidated Independent School District.  
http://www.lcisd.org/departments/academics/cte/earn-college-credits

http://www.lcisd.org/departments/academics/cte/programs-of-study/career-clusters
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