

Counseling and Guidance Plan

Each child, regardless of ability, has their own personality characteristics that lead to certain social and emotional needs as well as needs that arise because of the situation or environment in which they live. Children with high abilities, however, may have additional affective needs resulting from their increased capacity to think beyond their years, greater intensity in response, combinations of unique interests, personality characteristics, and conflicts that are different from those of their age mates.

The social and emotional issues below are common among high ability students and, are addressed during our social-emotional learning time at each grade level. Students in grades K-8 participate in weekly, evidence based, social-emotional lessons. Students in high school participate in MAP where students have time to meet with teachers and social-emotional lessons are implemented to give students the individualized support they need.

According to Dabrowski, gifted students may have “intensities” that may manifest themselves in one or more of these areas:

- Intellectual intentness and focus on a particular topic.
- Greater sensitivity to environment (appreciation for music or art, sensitivity to loud noises or bright lights, more allergies, etc.).
- Surplus of physical energy
- Vivid imagination and creativity
- Heightened emotional sensitivity (reaction to criticism, perfectionism, empathy, attachment).

Physical, cognitive, and emotional development may also be at different levels within the same child that may present a number of problems for the child with exceptional abilities. Adults, accustomed to advanced verbal reasoning from the child, may fail to understand emotional outbursts more typical of their chronological age. The child may find it difficult to communicate with age mate peers who are considerably below their intellectual level, even if they are at the same level emotionally. In general, the greater the level of ability, the greater the potential for discrepancies.

High ability students may place unrealistically high standards for performance on themselves which may result in anxiety, frustration, or self-blame for less-than-perfect performance.

Often they:

- Feel as though others (parents or teachers) have unrealistically high expectations. This may result in fear of failure, avoidance of challenges, depression, and connection of self-worth to performance.
- Develop unrealistically high standards for the performance of others.

High ability students may experience difficulty constructing their identities, which may lead to lowered self-esteem. Difficulty with identity development may result from any of the following:

- Lack of understanding of higher abilities and their implications
- Feeling different from one’s same-age peers
- Behaviors inconsistent with gender role expectations (e.g., sensitivity in gifted boys, assertiveness in gifted girls)
- Being identified as learning disabled as well as having high abilities
- Differences resulting from cultural, linguistic, or SES differences.

Zionsville Community School Counselors participate in training to understand and meet the needs of each student. They are also equipped with a variety of resources to help students and parents navigate the educational experience.

High ability learners are often multi-talented, and this can cause more difficulty in making career decisions. In Zionsville Community Schools we provide pre-college opportunities, such as dual- credit enrollment in college courses to ensure that our students are college and career ready.

At all levels we provide families with information on talent search programs and opportunities for gifted students, such as Midwest Talent Search through the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University (<http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu>). Our High School counselors also work one on one with students to select courses that reflect the individual needs of each student.

Additional Resources Available:

- “Guiding Students with High Abilities: Social and Emotional Considerations” is an IDOE resource available for download in a PDF on the IDOE High Ability website. This resource includes the following: Chart of common characteristics of high ability students and their possible negative classroom manifestations; Descriptions of Common Social and Emotional Issues faced by high ability students; Tips for parents, teachers, and counselors of high students, Resources for addressing the social and emotional needs of high ability students.
- The Indiana Association for the Gifted provides resources for high ability coordinators and parents and teachers of high ability students. Visit www.iag-online.org.
- The organization SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) has resources for addressing the social and emotional needs of high ability students. Visit www.sengifted.org.