



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Highly Capable Students

2023

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.185.050](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington’s Highly Capable Program (HCP) provides funding to support educational opportunities to meet the unique academic needs of this student population. Students who are highly capable learners often have advanced levels of academic performance; however, their academic needs often are not adequately met in the traditional classroom. Program services for highly capable students are needed to challenge these students to meet their academic potential. This report provides information on the instructional programs offered by local education agencies (LEAs) to support Highly Capable learners and data about participating students.

For the 2022–23 school year, 235 of the state’s school districts (including charter and tribal schools) reported that they provided services for HCP students. Of those, 216 school districts submitted End-of-Year Reports and completed all sections. According to these reports, 77,721 HCP students were served statewide by Highly Capable categorical funds. This reflects 6.85% of the total public school enrollment.

Students Served

In 2022–23 for state funded options, school districts reported that 35,191 of the students identified for the HCP were female, 42,156 were male, and 374 were not exclusively male or female. Reports on race and ethnicity include: 41,980 White, 1,529 Black/African American, 16,803 Asian, 9,250 Hispanic/Latino of any race(s), 312 American Indian/Alaskan Native, 211 Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 7,629 Two or More Races.

Instructional Programs

Instructional Programs (services) to HCP students are described as learning opportunities. These opportunities are proven by research and best practice data to effectively serve HCP students. Program models describe the setting or circumstances in which HCP services are delivered. Districts reported on 12 categories of program models ranging from grade level advancement to self-contained classrooms. For 2022–23, most participating districts provided HCP services through differentiation, flexible grouping, enrichment, and independent projects.

Funding

The state provided funding to districts for services for HCP students. In the 2022–23 school year, the state budgeted \$30,200,000. Over the last five years, the budget for the HCP has increased from \$14,522,746 in 2013–14 to the current amount, a 48% increase.

BACKGROUND

Washington's Highly Capable Program (HCP) is Basic Education

Washington's HCP is established in state law (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] [28A.185](#)) and administered through program rules (Washington Administrative Code) adopted by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Basic Education dollars may support services to Highly Capable students.

The HCP is established and supported in state law in the following places:

- [RCW 28A.150.220](#)— The instructional program of basic education provided by each school district shall include implementation of programs for highly capable students under RCW 28A.185.010 through 28A.185.030.
- [RCW 28A.185.020](#)— The legislature finds that, for highly capable students, access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction is access to a basic education.
- [RCW 28A.185.050](#)— The Highly Capable Program is to be monitored through a review of program components that include, but need not be limited to, the process used by the district to identify and reach out to highly capable students with diverse talents and from diverse backgrounds; assessment data and other indicators to determine how well the district is meeting the academic needs of highly capable student; and district expenditures used to enrich or expand opportunities for these students. The HCP is also required to identify once every five years, the various instructional programs offered to highly capable students and report this information to the Senate and House Education Committees.
- [RCW 28A.300.770](#)
- [WAC 392-170-012](#)— For highly capable students, access to accelerated learning and enhanced instruction is access to a basic education. School districts may access basic education funds, in addition to highly capable categorical funds, to provide appropriate highly capable student programs.

Inclusion of HCP in Basic Education law means districts are required to identify students across all grade spans and provide a continuum of services for K–12. Support and guidance from OSPI are crucial to meet these expectations.

UPDATE STATUS

Descriptions of Programs Offered to HCP Students

The following are specific program models that districts may offer to students participating in Highly Capable Programs. Additional data on numbers of districts reporting these program models and delivery of services, strategies, and curriculum modifications to support advanced learners, acceleration options, and non-traditional services provided outside the regular school day or school setting are found in Appendices A–D.

Advanced Grade Placement

A HCP student who has demonstrated achievement at a higher level than same-age peers is placed into an appropriate grade level. Example: A 1st grade student reads at the 4th grade level, is performing in mathematics at the 2nd grade level, and is socially mature. A school team, including parents, may decide the student would best be served by accelerating to the 2nd grade.

Dual Credit

HCP secondary students are offered the opportunity to enroll in Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) classes or College in the High School designated courses in specific content areas.

College in the High School classes are approved by a university and allow students to earn both high school and college credit with examination. Running Start courses offered by community colleges are open to 11th- and 12th-grade students for dual credit. Courses designated as AP must be approved by The College Board. Courses designated as IB must be approved by the International Baccalaureate Organization. AP/IB courses are designed to offer college level instruction, curriculum, and content. Each AP/IB course has a culminating exam which students may take to earn advanced college placement or college credit. Example: A high school HCP student has adopted AP/IB courses in math, literature, and world languages. Students who excel in one or more of these areas participate in the AP/IB courses, take an exam, and may receive both high school and college credits.

Advanced Subject Placement

An HCP student or small group of students who have demonstrated achievement at a higher level than their same-age peers are placed into an appropriate grade level or into a content area at a different grade level. Example: A 2nd grade student is reading at an 8th grade level. The school has a cluster group of 4th grade HCP students working with their reading specialist. The 2nd grade student meets with this reading group four times a week to receive appropriate level instruction.

Cluster Grouping

HCP students are grouped or “clustered” together in a regular mixed-ability classroom for all or part of a school day. Cluster grouping provides the opportunity for HCP students to work with other students of similar strengths, abilities, and interests. Example:

Seven HCP students were identified in 3rd grade. There are three 3rd grade classrooms at the school. The school has arranged schedules so one teacher has the seven identified HCP students in his classroom. This teacher has received professional development in cluster grouping and will be able to work effectively with these students.

Honors

HCP students may enroll in content-specific honors or accelerated courses at the middle, junior high, and high school levels. Honors classes examine a subject in greater depth, in content and analysis. Example: A high school offers English language arts and science honors courses. Students who excel in one or more of these areas participate in honors courses.

Independent Study

A student or a small group of students do an in-depth study in an area of interest. Example: A high school HCP student has a keen interest in marine biology. The student has taken the two biology classes offered in the high school and has proposed to study orca whales as an independent study project for additional credit. The student will work with the local university expert on marine mammals and will prepare a week-long course on orca whales. The student will then teach the unit in a 9th grade high school biology class, demonstrating the student’s knowledge.

Mentorships

HCP students are provided the opportunity to work with an expert in an academic or job-related area. They receive academic credit for their work. Example: A middle school HCP has arranged for a student who excels in mathematics to work with a local architect. The school counselor, architect, and student work together to design a plan in which the student will demonstrate his ability to apply his knowledge of math while working on projects with the architect. The architect will evaluate the student’s work and meet with the middle school math teacher to determine the student’s grade.

Other

This category is listed for districts to check for the many other types of activities they provide for their students. In some cases, districts have checked this category because their students are participating in courses or competitions provided by Centrum, Destination Imagination, or Future Problem Solving.

Part-Time Grouping (Content Specific)

Students are provided time to meet with their intellectual peers before, during, or after the regular school day. Instruction provides special experiences which enrich the regular school program to accommodate the special educational needs of HCP students. Example: Middle school HCP students meet with a math coach to prepare for competitions. Students who excel in math are coached by an expert to further advance interests and abilities.

Pre-AP/IB

HCP students are served in classes with teachers who have received training in pre-AP/IB instructional strategies. Strategies emphasize critical thinking skills, increased content knowledge, and study skills necessary for college-level work. Such courses may be designated as “advanced” or “honors.” Example: A 7th grade HCP student may be registered in Advanced English where pre-AP instructional strategies are used by the teacher.

Regular Classroom with Differentiated Instruction

HCP students remain in their regular classroom after identification. Assessment data is shared with the classroom teachers to drive the learning opportunities for students. Curriculum and instructional strategies are differentiated to meet academic needs. Example: There are 10 5th grade HCP students placed in the regular 5th grade classrooms. The 5th grade teachers have received professional development in differentiation and will be able to work effectively with these students in the regular classroom setting.

Self-Contained Classroom

Students are in a HCP classroom that offers accelerated instruction. Identified HCP students from a specific grade level or from a range of grades make up the class enrollment. Elementary students work with the same teacher for all content area instruction. Middle and high school students may be placed into “block scheduled courses.” Example: HCP students in 7th grade are placed into a reading/social studies and/or math/science block to receive appropriate level instruction.

Table 1 shows the variety and frequency of Highly Capable Instruction Program Models provided by LEAs throughout Washington state.

Table 1: Highly Capable Programs Implemented by Districts for 2022–23

Gifted Value: Program Service	Instructional Programs	Number of Local Education Agencies Reporting Instructional Program
General Education Classroom-Based	General Education Classroom-Based	288
Unique Highly Capable Services and Programs	Self-Contained Classroom	76
	Supplemental Pull-Out	114
	Specialty Online Courses	88
	Other	31
Acceleration Services and Programs	Advanced Placement	181
	Cambridge AICE	4
	Concurrent or Dual Enrollment	135
	Credit by Examination	40
	Early Entrance Middle, High School or College	84
	Grade Level Advancement	143
	Honors/Advanced	170
	International Baccalaureate (IB)	23
	Online Course/s for Subject Acceleration	144
	Running Start	230
	Subject-Based Acceleration	198
	Other	23
Non-Traditional Services and Programs	Mentorship	56
	Collaborative Partnership with Industry	49
	Cooperative Arrangement with ESD	9
	Cooperative Arrangement with Other District	16
	Supplemental Academic Competitions	111
	Supplemental Summer Enrichment or Acceleration	42
	Supplemental Before or After School	92
	Other	15

Source: Highly Capable Instructional Program data as reported in the Highly Capable Program Plan, Form Package 217, Page 4 in the iGrants system as of March 2023.

Funding

HCP Program funding has increased over the past five years. Table 2 demonstrates fiscal year funding from 2013–14 to 2022–23.

Table 2: Highly Capable Program Funding from 2018–19 to 2022–23

FY 2018–19	FY 2019–20	FY 2020–21	FY 2021–22	FY 2022–23
\$24,032,000	\$30,504,000	\$30,541,000	\$31,926,000	\$32,153,000

Students Served

Highly capable learners have high levels of academic, cognitive and/or creative performance or potential, compared to their peers. Black/African American students were significantly underrepresented in Highly Capable Programs. Other underrepresented race/ethnicities were Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native. Both White and Asian students were in HCP (Table 3).

Table 3: Percentages of Students Served in 2022–23 as Categorized by Race and Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Statewide Student Enrollment	Highly Capable Student Enrollment
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.33%	0.46%
Asian	7.84%	17.25%
Black/African/American	4.47%	1.77%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	23.51%	10.02%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1.12%	0.38%
Not Provided	0.01%	0.00%
Two or More Races	8.34%	8.72%
White	53.38%	61.39%

Source: Race and ethnicity enrollment demographics reported by districts for the 2022–23 school year and pulled from CEDARS as of March 2023

Highly Capable students receiving English language or special education services were significantly underserved in the HCP. Section 504 students were slightly disproportionately high in the HCP (Table 9). Twice exceptional students who are both highly capable and receiving special education services, are a small percent of the statewide special education population.

Table 4: Percentages of Students Served in 2022–23 as Categorized by Special Program Group

Special Program	Statewide Enrollment	Highly Capable Enrollment
English Language Learner	11.70%	1.10%
Free & Reduced Lunch	46.42%	19.28%
Section 504	4.42%	5.39%
Special Education	15.08%	2.90%

Source: Program enrollment demographics reported by districts for the 2022–23 school year and pulled from CEDARS as of March 2023.

Eliminating Barriers to Identification

Changes in state law require districts to address equitable identification of low-income students as found in RCW 28A.185.020. The 2017 Legislature gave specific direction to accomplish this goal.

Table 5 includes strategies to prioritize equitable identification of low-income students which are shown in rank order of frequency (highest to lowest) as reported by Washington state school districts.

Table 5: Highly Capable Program 2022–23 Strategies to Prioritize Equitable Identification of Low-Income Students

Strategies the Local Education Agency Uses	How Many LEAs Use the Strategy
Reviews all achievement databases (MAPS, SBAC, etc.) for evidence of high potential.	240
Tests during school day or provides transportation for testing outside of school day.	224
Uses whole-grade assessments (universal screening) to find students who are potentially Highly Capable, then follows up with parents and teachers to complete referral process.	202
Looks for evidence of single domain strength (ex., English language arts or math) to provide services.	197
Avoids use of “cut” scores or standardized test data alone to determine eligibility.	193
Assures that front office staff are knowledgeable about referral process or refers families to HCP contact person in timely way.	186
Routinely reviews all relevant data for any new student for indicators of high potential.	164
Has written procedures in place that promote referrals of low-income students, including recommendations from any source, as potentially Highly Capable.	164
Provides referral information in languages preferred by families.	161

Strategies the Local Education Agency Uses	How Many LEAs Use the Strategy
Provides professional development to educators on the needs and characteristics of diverse students, and indicators of high potential.	161
Looks for above-grade-level WaKIDS (Kindergarten assessment) or other early performance indicators.	158
Uses alternate data for identification of students who are potentially Highly Capable where appropriate (ex., Culturally-Linguistically-Economically Diverse or CLED Scale, non-verbal assessments, classroom-based evidence, student work portfolios).	129
Considers test biases and subtest design when selecting assessments for identification of students who are potentially Highly Capable.	126
Reviews IEPs of students with disabilities for indicators of high ability (twice exceptional).	124
Uses local, LEA norms for standardized assessments.	119
Reviews data for evidence of accelerated growth in acquiring language for ELs compared to peers.	113
Reviews prior year's data to determine effectiveness of strategies to address equitability.	110
Creates "watch list" of targeted students who show potential for high performance and follows up over time to encourage parents to refer them for possible identification.	109
Reaches out to families by native language speakers (ex., migrant or English language learners specialist) with information about referral process and benefits of Highly Capable services.	108
Includes referral information in enrollment packets.	59
Uses talent-development strategies to increase access for high-potential, low-income students. (Talent development uses enrichment strategies and instructional supports to help students develop and demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement.)	37
Other	20

Source: Highly Capable Low Income Identification Strategies as reported in the 2022–23 Highly Capable End-of-Year Report, Form Package 250, Page 1, D in the iGrants system, reported by 293 LEAs, and pulled March 2023.

HiCapPLUS Professional Learning Online Modules

There continues to be disproportionality in the students who are identified for services. The disproportionately low numbers of students in particular student groups—including students of color, English language learners, and students experiencing poverty—drove the state to apply in 2015 for a federal Jacob J. Javits Gifted and Talented Elementary and Secondary Education Act grant.

Project HiCapPLUS is an online system of professional learning for educators of talented and gifted students, available at no cost and housed on OSPI's website. Ten online modules combine research-based, effective practices for identification, instruction, and program operations with new information and knowledge essential to continuous improvement of services for Highly Capable students in grades K–12.

Project goals include:

- **Professional learning** for teachers and program directors that adapts to the opportunities and constraints of the local setting. HiCapPLUS will focus on identification and provision of services for Highly Capable students — in particular, those children who are students experiencing poverty, are English learners, and students with disabilities — all of whom have been passed over by traditional assessments and identification methods.
- **Technical assistance** that improves program operations and increases compliance with state law. HiCapPLUS is a capacity-building project that helps schools plan, conduct, and improve programs to identify and serve all Highly Capable students.
- **Information and knowledge** published online in the public domain and distributed widely through the communication channels of OSPI and its educational partners.

Highlights from Education Northwest's 2019 Evaluation of Project HiCapPLUS

Most participants found the overall event and package of online learning modules useful and appreciated resources and materials. Feedback received include:

- *Fantastic job! So excited to feel supported and have the tools to get there.*
- *Thank you for all your hard work on this terrific group of resources for our teacher candidates and our work with staff and students.*

Most participants found the variety of module content useful and felt these modules would work for a range of stakeholders in their school or district. Feedback received include:

- *Drawing attention to underrepresented populations [and] emphasizing the need to be aware of and address barriers to identification [are useful aspects of the modules].*
- *The files, specifically the PowerPoint presentations, were very useful.*
- *The PowerPoints with specific notes about them—this is amazing!*
- *Teachers and administrators were cited as the groups to benefit the most from the modules I think every teacher and administrator in our district would benefit. I hope to share it with them in staff meetings and training.*
- *Being a new HiCap coordinator, this is going to be very helpful for me personally.*

- *This will also be helpful for regular classroom teachers and administrators.*

Most participants anticipated using the online module content primarily for professional development and planning purposes. Feedback received include:

- *I will dig deeper into [the modules] so that I have a greater understanding of the material in them. This will allow me to know what will work best for my district.*
- *I can't wait to get back and share what I've learned and plan our next steps for identification and diversity. This really does offer so many tools. It also is supportive to connecting all areas of Highly Capable.*

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Washington's program for Highly Capable learners has changed significantly due to the increased supports provided through legislative investments and direction. The additional funds have supported district efforts to improve their identification processes and to provide additional and appropriate K-12 program opportunities.

The legislative focus on closing the opportunity gap for low-income students led OSPI to focus on providing technical assistance to districts on best practices to identify and then support low-income HCP students. Additional focus on identifying and serving underserved students was provided through passage of RCW 29A.300.770. Unfortunately, there continues to be disproportionality in the students who are identified for services. OSPI will continue to provide support and technical assistance to districts in addressing equitable identification and supporting the delivery of instruction and services to highly capable students.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

CEDARS Values for Location of Services or Programs for 2022–23.

Grade or Grade Band	Self-Contained Classroom	Supplemental Pull Out	Specialty Online Course/s	Other Unique Services
K–12	10	22	17	2
Kindergarten	8	46	2	3
Grade 1	14	50	2	2
Grade 2	30	56	6	3
Grade 3	52	66	10	5
Grade 4	58	70	12	6
Grade 5	59	70	15	7
Grade 6	37	44	26	10
Grade 7	28	21	37	10
Grade 8	27	21	39	9
Grade 9	4	3	48	3
Grade 10	3	3	48	3
Grade 11	2	4	48	3
Grade 12	2	4	46	2
Totals	334	480	356	68

Source: Highly Capable Instructional Program data as reported in the Highly Capable Program Plan, Form Package 217, Page 3 in the iGrants system and pulled as of March 2023.

Appendix B

General Education Highly Capable Program Strategies and Curriculum Modifications Reported by LEAs for 2022–23.

	Grade or Grade Band	Differentiation	Curriculum Compacting	Flexible Grouping	Enrichment	Independent Study	Independent Project	Pacing	Content Acceleration	Supplemental Instruction	Supplemental Materials	Cluster Grouping	Other
K-12	175	77	152	145	116	134	95	127	90	92	86	14	
Kindergarten	92	36	74	79	52	64	50	68	45	55	43	5	
Grade 1	91	36	73	78	51	63	49	67	44	54	43	5	
Grade 2	89	35	71	76	50	62	48	66	43	52	40	5	
Grade 3	87	36	69	74	50	63	47	66	42	50	39	5	
Grade 4	84	33	66	71	48	61	45	63	41	49	38	5	
Grade 5	84	32	66	70	47	61	44	62	41	47	36	5	
Grade 6	80	29	60	67	48	58	44	58	39	45	31	5	
Grade 7	72	27	53	58	43	52	39	52	35	41	30	5	
Grade 8	68	27	49	54	42	51	38	48	33	39	28	5	
Grade 9	21	9	15	15	11	12	11	16	10	13	12	3	
Grade 10	21	10	16	15	12	13	12	17	11	14	12	3	
Grade 11	18	9	14	13	11	11	10	16	10	12	11	3	
Grade 12	17	8	14	12	10	11	10	15	10	12	11	3	
Totals	999	404	792	827	591	716	542	741	494	575	460	71	

Source: Highly Capable Instructional Program data as reported in the Highly Capable Program Plan, Form Package 217, Page 4 in the iGrants system and pulled as of March 2023.

Appendix C

Highly Capable Acceleration Services and Programs Reported by LEAs for 2022–23.

Grade or Grade Band	Advanced Placement	Cambridge AICE	Concurrent or Dual Enrollment	Credit by Examination	Early Entrance	Grade Level Advancement	Honors/Advanced	International Baccalaureate	Online Course/s	Running Start	Subject Based Acceleration	Other Acceleration Program
K-12	2	0	1	2	4	77	4	2	14	7	59	0
Kindergarten	0	0	0	0	0	19	0	5	0	0	21	0
Grade 1	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	5	0	0	23	0
Grade 2	1	0	1	0	1	23	0	5	2	0	27	0
Grade 3	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	5	7	0	29	0
Grade 4	0	0	0	0	2	23	0	5	9	0	30	1
Grade 5	1	0	1	0	13	22	5	5	13	0	32	1
Grade 6	4	1	3	0	24	28	56	5	29	0	65	3
Grade 7	9	1	4	1	34	35	86	5	42	0	79	5
Grade 8	11	1	5	3	49	38	93	5	49	0	84	5
Grade 9	107	3	32	18	40	20	130	10	82	19	68	9
Grade 10	148	3	50	21	39	19	135	13	87	35	67	12
Grade 11	176	4	108	25	45	17	122	16	93	197	63	17
Grade 12	174	4	109	26	45	13	122	16	93	198	59	17
Totals	633	17	314	96	296	379	753	102	520	456	706	70

Source: Highly Capable Instructional Program data as reported in the Highly Capable Program Plan, Form Package 217, Page 4 in the iGrants system and pulled as of March 2023.

Appendix D

Highly Capable Non-Traditional Services and Programs Reported by LEAs for 2022–23.

	Grade or Grade Band	Mentorship	Collaborative Partnership with Industry	Cooperative Arrangement with ESD	Cooperative Arrangement with Other LEA	Supplemental Academic Competitions	Supplemental Summer Enrichment Acceleration Programs	Supplemental Before/After School Services and Other					
K-12	15	4	8	3	13	9	18	3					
Kindergarten	3	2	2	3	0	7	9	2					
Grade 1	3	2	2	3	2	8	10	2					
Grade 2	3	2	2	3	3	10	16	2					
Grade 3	4	3	3	5	14	12	24	2					
Grade 4	3	4	3	4	41	11	28	3					
Grade 5	3	3	2	5	53	14	32	3					
Grade 6	6	7	2	5	59	16	38	3					
Grade 7	9	8	3	3	61	15	36	3					
Grade 8	8	7	3	3	62	14	34	2					
Grade 9	22	20	4	5	72	12	24	1					
Grade 10	23	22	4	6	72	11	24	2					
Grade 11	29	29	4	9	72	11	22	3					
Grade 12	31	32	5	9	71	11	22	3					
Totals	162	145	47	66	595	161	337	34					

Source: Highly Capable Instructional Program data as reported in the Highly Capable Program Plan, Form Package 217, Page 4 in the iGrants system and pulled as of March 2023.

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