



## Administrative Unit

<b>Administrative Unit name:</b> Rio Blanco BOCES - 64213	<b>Region:</b> Northwest	
<b>Name of Executive Director:</b> Teresa Bandel-Schott <b>Name of Lead District Gifted Education Director:</b> Teresa Bandel-Schott	<b>Email:</b> tschott@rangelyk12.org	
<b>Director’s mailing address:</b> 402 W. Main	<b>Phone number:</b> 970-675-2064	<b>Fax:</b> 970-675-5023

<b>Number of Districts within Administrative Unit:</b>	
<b>Member District</b>	<b>Superintendent Name</b>
Meeker School District	Chris Selle
Rangely School District	Matt Scoggins

12.02(2) **Comprehensive Plan** “...The program plan shall be implemented by all constituent schools and districts of the AU. ... The Department shall review all program plans for completeness. An AU’s program plan shall be deemed complete if it addresses all elements specified in Section 12.02(2)(a) through 12.02(2)(l) of these Rules”

**Directions:**

Write the administrative unit’s description of how it implements each element of the Program Plan and how the AU plans to improve or enhance each element as appropriate. Write how the AU Key requirements of each section of the plan are listed as they are described in the Rules.

## Procedures for Parent, Family and Student Engagement and Communication

In Rio Blanco BOCES, communication about gifted education is highly valued. Stakeholders have access to information on programming, identification, college/career planning, Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs) and student achievement through multiple sources.

One source of information is the Rio Blanco BOCES Gifted and Talented Handbook. The Handbook details the mission and vision of gifted education and how the program elements work together to comprise a consistent and equitable system of supports for gifted learners. The Handbook provides in-depth information on the screening/ identification process, programming/service delivery options, early access/acceleration procedures, continuous program evaluation process, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, and definitions of key vocabulary.

Another source of information is the Rio Blanco BOCES Gifted and Talented Program Brochure. The brochure is a snapshot of the information available in the Handbook and it outlines options for programming, options for delivering instruction, procedures and criteria for identification, and a definition of gifted education.



In addition to the Handbook and the Brochure, information is available on the Rio Blanco BOCES website. The site includes a link to the Brochure as well as links to additional resources for parents and staff such as the Center for Bright Kids, Hoagies Gifted, and Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG).

Rio Blanco BOCES recognizes that gifted students are a unique population who frequently reach educational and emotional milestones well ahead of peers. In order to inform parents and students of the options available to meet these unique needs, Rio Blanco BOCES provides information to parents at Parent-Teacher conferences and ALP meetings such as:

- Concurrent enrollment courses and Advanced Placement courses
- SENG training opportunities
- Parent guidance books such as A Parents' Guide to Gifted Children
- Conference opportunities such as The National Association of Gifted Children Conference
- Student achievement and possible under-achievement concerns

Parent involvement is highly valued and parents help students develop their academic and affective goals for their ALP. Progress on these goals is reported at conferences and/or at the end of the year using data collected from state and local assessments. When students are under-achieving, the root cause is addressed by a team which includes staff and parents in order to develop a plan to help students realize their potential.

#### Areas for Improvement

Rio Blanco BOCES constantly reviews the gifted education program to find areas in need of improvement. One area that is in the process of improvement is involving parents in post-secondary opportunities. Another area is translating information into languages other than English. Translators are available upon request but written information is only available in English.

#### Next Steps:

1. Continue working with the SWAP Coordinator to model a college/career plan.
2. Continue to look for translation options so that all parents have access to written information.

## Definition of “Gifted Student”

### Definition

The Exceptional Children's Education Act (ECEA) requires all administrative units (AUs) in Colorado to identify and serve students between the ages of five and twenty-one, and age four in administrative units with Early Access, whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs.

Administrative units include: school districts, Charter School Institute (CSI), multi-district administrative units and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES).

ECEA Rules, revised in 2015, specify the areas for gifted identification in Colorado. A student may be identified in one or more of these domains (areas):

#### General or Specific Intellectual Ability

Intellectual ability is exceptional capability or potential recognized through Cognitive processes (e.g., memory, reasoning, rate of learning, spatial reasoning, ability to find a solve problems, ability to manipulate abstract ideas and make connections).

#### Specific Academic Aptitude



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Specific academic aptitude is exceptional capability or potential in an academic content area(s) (e.g., a strong knowledge base or the ability to ask insightful, pertinent questions within the discipline). All academic areas should be considered.

#### Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Musical, Dance or Psychomotor Abilities

Visual arts, performing arts, musical, dance or psychomotor abilities are exceptional capabilities or potential in talent areas (e.g., art, drama, music, dance, body awareness, coordination, and physical skills).

#### Creative or Productive Thinking

Creative or productive thinking is exceptional capability or potential in mental processes (e.g. critical thinking, creative problem solving, humor, independence, original thinking, and/or products).

#### Leadership Abilities

Leadership is the exceptional capability or potential to influence and empower people (e.g., social perceptiveness, visionary ability, communication skills, problem solving, inter and intra-personal skills, and a sense of responsibility.)

Identification ensures that appropriate programming meets the academic and affective needs and the post-secondary outcomes of identified gifted students.

The state's definition of gifted children serves as the basis for identification and program implementation in Rio Blanco BOCES as outlined in the balance of this Comprehensive Program Plan. The definition, as written in the [Colorado Rules for the Exceptional Children's Educational Act \(ECEA\)](#):

*"Gifted Children" means those persons between the ages of four and twenty-one whose aptitude or competence in abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment in one or more domains are so exceptional or developmentally advanced that they require special provisions to meet their educational programming needs. Gifted children are hereafter referred to as gifted students. Children under five who are gifted may also be provided with early childhood special educational services. Gifted students include gifted students with disabilities (i.e. twice exceptional) and students with exceptional abilities or potential from all socio-economic, ethnic, and cultural populations. Gifted students are capable of high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behavior by virtue of any or a combination of these areas of giftedness:*

- *General or Specific Intellectual Ability*
- *Specific Academic Aptitude*
- *Creative or Productive Thinking*
- *Leadership Ability*
- *Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Musical, Dance, or Psychomotor Abilities*

## Identification Procedures, Criteria for Determining Exceptional Ability (Giftedness) or Talent Pool, and Identification Portability

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Rio Blanco BOCES strives to identify students in all areas of giftedness by using a variety of data to develop a body of evidence. The body of evidence includes information such as standardized test results, classroom assessment results, teacher observations, parent observations, performance evaluations, and cognitive assessment results.



To help ensure equity, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are screened using a non-verbal assessment that helps level the playing field for students with disabilities, students with a first language other than English, and students with reading difficulties. Results from the screening are used as a source of referral and become a part of the body of evidence for students.

Other assessments, such as state assessments and NWEA MAP assessments, are also used as a source of referral. In addition, referrals can be made by staff, parents, and students. Determinations on referrals are made by the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) team and are completed as soon as a body of evidence is sufficient to make an informed decision. Parents are informed of the decision either in writing or verbally and a determination letter is placed in the student's cumulative file. The MTSS team, which includes at least one member with training in gifted education, must consider the entire body of evidence when making a determination. Not meeting criteria on a single assessment does not prevent further consideration for identification. Each referral is unique but some of the items considered by MTSS might be:

- Scores on standardized assessments that are in the gifted range, i.e. at/above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or the exceptional/ distinguished range
- Observation scales completed by teachers in the suspected areas of giftedness
- Portfolios demonstrating performance in the gifted range

Students who do not yet meet the criteria for giftedness are provided with differentiation and monitored for future identification. Students who meet the criteria continue with the gifted education process by developing an Advanced Learning Plan as outlined in the following section. Every effort is made to ensure that students identified as gifted meet the rules of portability as outlined in the [Colorado Rules for the Exceptional Children's Educational Act \(ECEA\)](#) so that students do not need to be retested in the event that they move to another administrative unit (AU) within Colorado. Rio Blanco BOCES transfers the qualifying evidence along with the ALP to the receiving district to help ensure seamless service for the student. When receiving a gifted student from another AU, Rio Blanco BOCES reviews the file and informs parents of the determination of eligibility within two months of enrollment.

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## Advanced Learning Plan Content, Procedures and Responsibilities

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An annual ALP is developed for every student who has been identified as gifted. ALPs are unique to each student, developed by the student along with input from parents, teachers, and gifted education personnel. Participation is documented, when possible, with signatures from parents and staff.

The ALP documents the student's interests, areas of giftedness, and qualifying data to ensure portability. Students are encouraged to lead their ALP meeting and advocate for their program needs, such as for supplemental curriculum and/or extension opportunities. ALP records are articulated from one school level to the next so that the receiving school is prepared to continue gifted education services without delay.

The academic and affective goals are standards-based, reflective of the student's academic strengths and affective needs, and may contain planning for post-secondary aspirations. ALP goals align with classroom instruction and progress towards these goals is provided at parent-teacher conferences as well as at the end of the year. Progress is monitored using data that aligns with the student's area of giftedness. Responsibility for monitoring progress is shared between gifted education personnel and the teacher(s) in the area(s) of giftedness. Affective needs may be monitored by a variety of people such as parents, teachers, coaches, administrators, counselors, gifted education personnel, and even by the students themselves

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## Programming

Each school in the Rio Blanco BOCES has a unique approach designed to meet the needs of individual students. The following options are available for buildings to consider when supporting gifted students.

### Elementary Programs

**School wide Cluster Grouping Model** - An inclusion model in which gifted students are integrated into mixed-ability classrooms with teachers trained to provide appropriate differentiated learning opportunities. Cluster grouping allows teachers with specialized training in gifted education to challenge gifted students in all content areas. The pacing of instruction and the depth of content that gifted students need is made possible through compacting, differentiation, and flexible grouping arrangements (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008)

**Flexible Grouping (Interest Based)** - Involves grouping students together for different purposes. The groups are formed based on ability, achievement, or interest, and should be fluid and flexible common methods used to form flexible groups that are successful with gifted students include grouping by:

- Interest area(s)
- Content mastery
- Ability level
- Project choice
- Readiness level for targeted objective

This can be done at the school-level or within a classroom.

**Flexible Grouping (School wide flooding)** - the school has a common time for a specific subject and all students are grouped according to ability level to receive instruction in their zone of proximal development regardless of their age or grade-level. ***Schools that practice flooding MUST have provisions in place for students whose abilities reach beyond their grade span.***



**USTARS-Plus (Using Science Talents and Abilities to Recognize Students-Promoting Learning for Underrepresented Students)** - An instructional framework that empowers teachers to provide environments that nurture the intellectual and emotional well-being of young children (Grades K-3) who may be overlooked due to poverty, cultural/linguistic differences, and/or disabilities. U-STARS-PLUS provides high-quality science and literature instruction using 32 popular children's books, allowing teachers to respond to children's strengths with challenging, advanced educational experiences. In addition, U-STARS-PLUS extends learning into the home, engaging families in meaningful ways to support a child's academic success.

### Secondary Programs

**Cluster Grouping Within Classrooms** - An inclusion model in which gifted students are integrated into mixed-ability classrooms with teachers trained to provide appropriate differentiated learning opportunities. Cluster grouping allows teachers with specialized training in gifted education to challenge gifted students in all content areas. The pacing of instruction and the depth of content that gifted students need is made possible through compacting, differentiation, and flexible grouping arrangements (Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008)

**Content Replacement Programs (Subject/Course specific)** - Students usually receive accelerated learning opportunities in a specific subject as a replacement for an on grade-level course. On average, the curriculum is one to two grade levels beyond the student's assigned grade. The course may or may not be multi-aged.

### Examples:

- GT Reading course (Great Books, Inquiry-based Projects)
- GT Creative Writing course
- Humanities
- AP courses
- Dual Enrollment courses

**Enrichment "Specials" Replacement Program** - Students have the ability to choose special electives. The class is not tied to a specific core content. The course may or may not be multi-aged. Themes might include:

- Destination Imagination
- Future Problem Solvers
- Robotics
- Scientific Research and Reporting

**Mentorships** - students that have an extreme passion or aptitude for a subject may be placed with an adult mentor. This arrangement may take many forms that range from coaching to actual internships. This is a Tier 3 enrichment. Students must apply for a mentor and be willing to make a time commitment both in school and out of school.

### Social and Emotional Programs



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In addition to academic programming, gifted students could be served through a variety of programs that address their unique social and emotional needs including the following:

- **Individual counseling**
- **"Friends" groups**
- **"Lunch-Bunch" groups**
- **Transition support (building change, college planning)**
- **Targeted seminars (underachievement, perfectionism, goal-setting, metacognition, )**

Additionally, grade-level and subject-level acceleration are also programming options available in Rio Blanco BOCES. Acceleration appropriateness is determined by the MTSS team. Subject acceleration is based on a body of evidence that includes assessment data such as NWEA MAP assessments. Whole grade acceleration involves an in-depth analysis outlined in the Handbook and usually requires additional cognitive and academic assessments.

## Evaluation and Accountability Procedures

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One of the most important considerations for Rio Blanco BOCES is to ensure that the gifted education program is effective for the students and families that it serves. Stakeholder feedback is valued and used to adjust practices in the gifted education process.

Evaluation of student achievement is analyzed intermittently throughout the school year using data from assessments such as NWEA MAP assessments. This data is combined with annual data from the state assessments, CMAS/PARCC to determine if

1. academic growth is adequate for gifted students.
2. there are gaps in achievement among demographic groups within the gifted population.
3. academic achievement is at expected levels for gifted students.

The analysis of the data helps identify trends in gifted students' achievement. Rio Blanco BOCES staff determines if troubling trends, if any, are convergent or divergent from the general population. An action plan is written for divergent trends and the plan is monitored throughout the year by the gifted education staff to ensure that improvements are being made.

Rio Blanco BOCES also monitors affective growth and/or college-career readiness. Affective growth may be monitored by gifted education staff, general education staff, counselors, and/or parents. Periodic feedback on both academic and affective growth is shared with stakeholders through written reports, ALP meetings, SENG meetings, and/or Parent-Teacher conferences during the year. Annual reporting of achievement is contained in the Gifted Education UIP Addendum, as well.

Overall program evaluation is conducted through personal interviews with parents and staff to help determine program effectiveness. Information gathered from the interviews is reviewed by the MTSS team to determine trends. The trend data helps improve elements of program options, program delivery, and communication processes. Surveys are currently being developed to be able to extend and streamline the process.

## Personnel

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As noted in the Programming section, Rio Blanco BOCES supports a variety of options for gifted students. Being a small BOCES allows teachers to be individually trained as needed to deliver the



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programming in an effective manner. New teachers are introduced to the gifted education process during the course of induction. All teachers receive an annual gifted education review during staff meetings and/or in-service opportunities.

To help support teacher efficacy, Rio Blanco BOCES employs at least one person who is endorsed or becoming endorsed in gifted education. This person is primarily responsible for attending regional trainings and state meetings, then relaying information from these opportunities back to BOCES stakeholders. Participation by a person knowledgeable in gifted education enables Rio Blanco BOCES to remain in compliance with changing regulations as well as to stay abreast of current best practices.

The Rio Blanco BOCES Director is responsible for disseminating information regarding gifted education professional development opportunities, such as college degree opportunities, to the staff via the two gifted education coordinators. The coordinators encourage staff participation and offer assistance as needed.

## Budget

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Each district prepares an annual budget that is reported by Rio Blanco BOCES. The budget includes the funds that are received through the state allocation as well as funds that are contributed by each district. The funds may be used on allowable expenses such as to pay stipends or salaries for gifted education personnel, professional development opportunities, materials to help with the education of gifted students, testing materials, some technology, and other items as appropriate. Rio Blanco BOCES "flows through" the funds to individual districts. The districts then decide how to leverage the funds in a way that makes sense for their individual situations. Most districts use a collaborative process to determine how to utilize the funding by gathering feedback from gifted education personnel and sometimes from parent groups.

## Reports

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The districts in Rio Blanco BOCES update the Comprehensive Program Plan through the development of the UIP Gifted Addendum. The addendum contains an analysis of disaggregated (when the population is large enough) gifted student achievement and growth in order to identify trends that may be convergent or divergent from the general school population. These trends are monitored for improvement using formative and summative assessments. Rio Blanco BOCES also files all budget reports in a timely manner to ensure compliance with state rules and regulations. Student information in the Data Pipeline is as accurate as possible and includes disaggregated information regarding students who have been identified as gifted. When applicable, the information also includes Preschool students who are being served through Early Access. The BOCES Director coordinates the gifted education program

## Record Keeping

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Records regarding gifted students are kept in accordance with governmental guidelines. ALP information is shared on an as-needed basis to protect the privacy of the students. ALPs are stored in a secure location and gifted student records are maintained/destroyed in accordance with the AU's system for the general student population. Individually identifiable student information is masked when ALPs are used for training purposes.

## Procedures for Disagreements

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## Appeals

In the event that a parent or teacher feels that an error has been made in the identification process, appeals shall be made in the following order:

1. District Coordinator
2. Principal/building GT committee or student support team
3. Executive Director of Rio Blanco BOCES
4. Superintendent
5. Board of Trustees

## Monitoring

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Rio Blanco BOCES is in compliance with applicable state and federal laws/regulations regarding the Comprehensive Program Plan, the identification of gifted students, special education services for gifted students who also have a disability, and updating performance and enrollment information through the UIP Gifted Education Addendum filed by each district.