

Homer Community Schools

High Ability Learner (HAL) Plan

District Philosophy

Homer Community Schools is committed to meeting the needs of every student by providing educational opportunities aligned to individual ability levels. The district recognizes that high ability learners require differentiated instruction, advanced opportunities, and support to reach their full potential. It is the responsibility of the district to identify high ability learners and provide appropriate services to meet their academic and social-emotional needs.

Definition of High Ability Learner (HAL)

High ability learners are students who demonstrate or show the potential to demonstrate:

- High performance in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas
- Exceptional leadership capacity
- Academic excellence

These students require differentiated educational services beyond those provided in the general education classroom.

Goals of the HAL Program

1. Identify students with high ability using multiple data points.
 2. Provide a continuum of services to meet student needs.
 3. Support both academic and social-emotional development.
 4. Increase student growth, achievement, and engagement.
 5. Expand opportunities for advanced coursework and career readiness.
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Identification Procedures

Universal Screening

- Identification begins in 4th grade using NSCAS and MAP data.
 - All students are reviewed for eligibility (universal consideration).
 - Additional screening occurs annually through 12th grade.
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Identification Criteria (Minimum 3 Data Points Required)

Homer Community Schools uses a **multi-criteria approach**:

1. Quantitative Data

- NSCAS (Advanced in ELA, Math, or Science)
- MAP scores (95th percentile in one category)
- Classroom assessments/grades
- ACT (score of 24 or above)

2. Qualitative Data

- Teacher observations
- Classroom performance
- Student work samples

3. Additional Data (Either Category)

- Behavioral indicators
 - Leadership evidence
 - Portfolio or performance-based evidence
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Notification & Appeals

- Parents are notified within 30 school days of identification
 - Parents may request a review or appeal
 - Students may be re-evaluated annually
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Portability

Students identified as HAL in another Nebraska district will retain identification upon enrollment in Homer Community Schools.

Continuum of Services

Homer Community Schools provides a continuum of services during the school day:

Differentiated Instruction

- Tier 1 differentiation in all classrooms
- Enrichment and extension activities
- Curriculum compacting

Acceleration

- Subject-specific acceleration
- Advanced coursework (secondary)
- Dual credit opportunities

Flexible Grouping

- Small group instruction
- Cross-grade grouping
- Targeted enrichment blocks

Enrichment Opportunities

- Project-based learning
- Independent study
- Career exploration opportunities

Mentoring & Real-World Connections

- Internship opportunities
- Career speakers and mentorship

Affective Support

- Goal setting
- Resilience and mindset development
- Social-emotional learning support

Program Delivery

- Services are embedded within the school day
- Teachers are responsible for differentiation

Staff Training

- Ongoing professional development on:
 - Differentiation strategies
 - Identification of HAL students
 - Social-emotional needs of advanced learners
 - Collaboration through PLCs and instructional coaching
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Program Evaluation

The district will:

- Monitor student performance data:
 - NSCAS
 - ACT
 - Growth data
 - Advanced coursework participation
 - Review program effectiveness annually
 - Conduct a comprehensive program review every 5 years
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Data Reporting

Homer Community Schools will disaggregate and report:

- Academic achievement
 - Growth
 - Graduation rates
 - Participation in advanced coursework
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Program Management

- Superintendent oversees program implementation
- Principals support building-level execution
- Teachers deliver instruction and differentiation
- Collaboration through MTSS and leadership teams

Funding

- The district will apply annually for HAL funding through NDE
 - Funds will support:
 - Professional development
 - Instructional resources
 - Enrichment opportunities
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Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Homer Community Schools is committed to refining and improving the HAL program to ensure all high ability learners are challenged, supported, and prepared for future success.

Appeal Procedure

Step 1: Written Request

The parent/guardian submits a written appeal within 30 school days to the building principal or superintendent including:

- Student name and grade
 - Specific concern or reason for appeal
 - Any additional supporting data (testing, work samples, etc.)
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Step 2: HAL Review Team Evaluation

A **HAL Review Team** (administrator, teacher(s), and appropriate staff) will:

- Review all previously collected data (quantitative and qualitative)
 - Ensure the student was evaluated using multiple data points
 - Verify that identification procedures were followed consistently
 - Consider any new information submitted
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Step 3: Holistic Review

The team will conduct a holistic profile review, which may include:

- Additional assessment data

- Teacher rating scales or updated observations
- Student performance and work samples

This ensures decisions are not based on a single measure, but rather a defensible body of evidence

Step 4: Meeting (Optional)

Parents/guardians may request a meeting with the HAL Review Team to:

- Discuss the identification process
 - Provide additional insight or context
 - Ask questions about services or next steps
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Step 5: Written Decision

A written decision will be provided within 30 school days, including:

- Summary of data reviewed
 - Final determination
 - Rationale for the decision
 - Any recommendations or next steps
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Step 6: Further Review

If the parent/guardian disagrees with the decision, they may request further review through:

- Superintendent review
 - Board of Education process (aligned with district complaint procedures)
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Re-Evaluation and Additional Entry Points

Students may be reconsidered for HAL identification through:

- Annual universal screening
- Teacher or parent nomination
- New assessment data

Potential Candidates for Program

Students who demonstrate potential but do not yet meet full HAL criteria may be placed in a **Potential Pool**:

- Typically includes students scoring near threshold levels (e.g., 75–89th percentile)
- Monitored through ongoing classroom performance and assessment data
- Reviewed annually for possible identification

This ensures multiple pathways into the program and reduces the likelihood of overlooking high-potential students

Commitment to Equity and Defensibility

Homer Community Schools ensures that:

- Multiple pathways to identification are available
- Decisions are not based on a single test score
- Qualitative measures are used alongside quantitative data
- Identification procedures are clearly documented and consistently applied
- Families are informed and involved throughout the process

This approach ensures the district maintains a defensible, equitable, and student-centered HAL identification system.
