SUMMARY OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

Analysis of the responses to the numerous questions in the self-assessment revealed the strengths and needs for the school system as a whole. The following is a summary of the findings from the surveys.

Strengths:

As a system, Cleveland County Schools' most significant asset is its dedicated, qualified faculty and staff who are committed to the students and to their roles in teaching the students. Other strengths include the cooperative environment in which teachers at all levels strive to meet the needs of AIG students, the current challenging course options, and the high level support from the school board for the AIG program.

Cleveland County Schools offers a wide array of gifted services to students in grades K-12. The strengths identified through self-assessment include:

- Quality and dedication of AIG Specialists
- Challenging and rigorous AIG courses
- Comprehensive offerings of high school AP and honors classes
- On-line courses at the high school level
- Enrichment program and additional services for AIG students in grades 2-8
- Talents Unlimited Program in grades K-3
- Parent involvement
- Opportunities for gifted students in extracurricular activities
- Opportunities for curriculum differentiation in the regular classroom
- Out of school educational experiences
- Competitive activities
- Administrative support

Needs:

The overall need for the Cleveland County Schools' AIG Program is a comprehensive plan with clearly articulated policies for services in Kindergarten through 12th grade. The system level plan should respond to the following identified needs:

- Comprehensive screening to include search for under-represented populations
- Multiple criteria for identification including an alternative assessment component
- Wide array of service options
- Rigorous and expanded AIG curriculum in kindergarten through 12th grade
- Additional AIG personnel to equalize services in the merged system
- Improved communication among all involved parties
- Updated materials and technology
- Highly qualified teachers for AP and honors courses
- Appropriate training for all staff

Synthesis of Concerns:

Parents, teachers and students were highly satisfied with the service delivery and level of challenge in the AIG program. The following represents a synthesis of concerns from all participants in Cleveland County Schools' self-assessment of current services for gifted education. This list of concerns should be used to further AIG program planning and development.

Elementary:

- Additional time in AIG services
- Communication
- Stricter criteria
- Earlier identification
- K-3 service delivery
- Assistance to regular classroom teachers for curriculum differentiation

Middle:

- Higher standards for placement in advanced classes
- More diverse learning activities (projects, essays, speeches, etc.)
- Communication
- Leadership opportunities
- Coordination of the quantity of homework

High:

- Rigor in academic courses
- More AP courses
- Smaller class size
- Higher standards for entrance to AP and honors courses
- Quantity of homework and projects due
- Qualified teachers for honors and AP courses
- More communication

Recommendations:

The following recommendations should be considered in the plan for the Academically Intellectually Gifted Program in Cleveland County Schools:

1. Develop a clearly defined and articulated system of identifying gifted students which includes multiple criteria, multiple assessment tools to meet diverse cultural needs, personnel preparation for recognizing characteristics of gifted students, and training of the Needs Determination Team.

2. Develop a basic program of service delivery for all levels with an additional array of service options available according to student need.

3. Work with principals to increase time with highly gifted students

4. Expand the nurturing program to include specific criteria, pre and post testing, and detailed curriculum.

5. Designate an AIG contact person at each school.

6. Develop strategies for improving communication to parents and among teachers. Some suggestions to facilitate this might include:
    - Provide common planning time for AIG Specialist and regular classroom teacher
    - Utilize flexible scheduling for parent conferences
    - Utilize newsletters, website, and AIG brochure to communicate with parents
    - Provide common planning for AIG Specialists

7. Staff development should be made available to all personnel and administrators concerned with implementing the revised AIG Plan.

8. In order to adequately support the proposed changes in the Gifted Education Program, an increase in personnel is highly recommended. Specifically, additional AIG Specialists are needed to assure district-wide consistency of service provisions. In an effort to provide services at the highest level, additional positions are needed.

9. In order to assure the highest quality of AP and Honors instruction, teachers of these courses should have earned AP credentials for AP instruction and AIG licensure for honors instruction. In addition, AP instructors should attend annual update workshops as recommended by the College Board.

10. Continue to provide resources to upgrade materials and technology to equalize resources throughout the merged system.