

FACT SHEET: HISD VANGUARD PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND

HISD has offered Vanguard programs, also known as programs for gifted and talented (G/T) students, since 1974. As with other state-required programs, Vanguard programs are evaluated annually to determine their effectiveness and to analyze students' academic achievement. Following a PEER (Peer Examination, Evaluation, and Redesign) Committee review in the fall of 2005, HISD developed Vanguard program standards, and the Board of Education approved them in March 2007. These standards focus on establishing consistency in implementation of Vanguard programs district-wide, strengthening the programs' academic rigor, and increasing campus/district accountability for the success of G/T students. The Vanguard standards may be viewed at www.houstonisd.org/portal/site/giftedtalented.

SCHOOLS & STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Every HISD school offers a Vanguard program for G/T students. There are two types of program designs: Vanguard Neighborhood and Vanguard Magnet. Vanguard Neighborhood schools offer G/T services to students who live in the neighborhood (zoned students) and to any non-zoned students who transfer for programs other than Vanguard Magnet programs. Vanguard Magnet programs provide G/T services to their zoned students and students on a Vanguard Magnet transfer. There are 21 Vanguard Magnet schools in the district. Currently, HISD has 30,000 G/T students, which is 16.5 % of the district's total enrollment. Grade-level, ethnicity, and five-year growth data is available upon request.

PROGRAM GOALS/FEATURES

HISD Vanguard programs are designed for students who perform at, or show the potential for performing at, a high level of accomplishment compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. These students require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. All HISD Vanguard programs share these characteristics:

- Vanguard programs use the same G/T identification criteria.
- Vanguard programs have a G/T admissions committee.
- Vanguard programs implement the HISD G/T Curriculum Framework K–12, which provides for differentiation through increased depth and complexity, higher-level thinking skills, and developing independent research skills focusing on advanced-level products.
- G/T students receive daily G/T instruction from a specially trained G/T teacher in the four core content areas in grades K–8 and in at least two advanced-level courses in grades 9–12.
- Vanguard programs deliver their instruction in homogeneous or heterogeneous group settings, depending on the total number of identified G/T students.
- Vanguard programs may mix zoned and non-zoned G/T students for program services.
- Vanguard programs actively encourage parent and community involvement.

STATUTE/LAW/POLICY

The Texas Education Code, section 29.121 requires all schools to provide G/T services for eligible students. School districts are charged with establishing their own criteria for identifying G/T students, but must measure giftedness with both qualitative and quantitative measures.

TESTING FOR G/T ELIGIBILITY

G/T identification is required for participation in all Vanguard programs, whether at a Vanguard Neighborhood (zoned) school or a Vanguard Magnet school. In HISD, students can apply for identification as G/T as early as age 4, prior to entering kindergarten. All students who are identified as G/T in the elementary grades maintain their eligibility through the end of fifth grade, but they must re-qualify prior to entering sixth grade. Thereafter, no further re-qualification is needed. There are a variety of ways in which students are nominated for G/T eligibility. A student in any grade may be tested based upon teacher recommendation, parent application and/or the student nominating him/her self. Additionally, ALL HISD students in kindergarten and fifth grade are assessed to ensure program access for all.

The assessments used to identify students for the Vanguard programs are:

- Entering kindergarteners (individually administered): the Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement (English)/ Bateria III Pruebas de habilidades aprovechamiento (Spanish) and the Wechsler Nonverbal Scale of Ability (English and Spanish)
- All students K-12: Naglieri Nonverbal Abilities Test-2 (NNAT-2) and the Stanford/Aprenda Achievement Test

APPLICATION PROCESS/TIMELINE

Students in all grades (or those new to the district) can apply for Vanguard services in their neighborhood (zoned) school through the Vanguard application. The application process for identification as G/T involves the following:

- Parents obtain a Vanguard application by calling 713-556-6954 or by visiting www.houstonisd.org/portal/site/giftedtalented.
- Parents collect required records from their child's current school (see application for specific details).
- Parents submit the application form to their neighborhood (zoned) school. G/T testing is scheduled if needed and is conducted during the district established testing windows.
- Students applying for acceptance to a Vanguard Magnet school can apply using the Vanguard Magnet application and following the district Magnet timelines. Unlike the standard Magnet application, only one Vanguard Magnet application can be submitted, indicating three school choices. Acceptance into a Vanguard Magnet school is based on spaces available for non-zoned G/T students. If there are more qualified applicants than spaces available, then all non-zoned G/T students are selected through a lottery.

QUALIFICATIONS

Identification as G/T is determined by points obtained based upon various criteria: achievement test, abilities test, grades, teacher recommendation, obstacle points, and (in the case of the very young) parent recommendation. Scores are entered and converted into points on a G/T Identification Matrix, which can be viewed at www.houstonisd.org/portal/site/giftedtalented.

WEBSITE

The Advanced Academics Department website, www.houstonisd.org/portal/site/giftedtalented, contains general information about Vanguard programs, the application process, the G/T Identification criteria and matrices, applications, and links to related websites.

CONTACTS

Advanced Academics Department, 713-556-6954 or www.houstonisd.org

Director

Mary Jane Gomez mgomez@houstonisd.org

G/T Program Specialists

Noval Alexander nalexand@houstonisd.org
Gloria Bermudez gbermude@houstonisd.org
Clara Gerard cgerard@houstonisd.org
Angela Isart aisart@houstonisd.org
Brenda Pedersen bpederse@houstonisd.org

Secretary

Ana Baez abaez@houstonisd.org