



***Houston ISD Gifted & Talented Education
and
Services Family Handbook***



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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The content in this guide is subject to regular updates due to legislative decisions, or feedback received from our stakeholders. For this reason, we are including the date the guide was last edited or updated.

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2024**



WELCOME TO HISD!

We strive to create a culture of parent involvement and empowerment, specifically among our parents of students identified as gifted and talented. It is our responsibility to provide an environment in which you as parents feel empowered and confident in navigating gifted and talented resources and processes based on appropriate delivery of services for your child.



MISSION

The Gifted and Talented Department is committed to excellence and equity one education through high-impact intentional and strategic delivery of personalized instruction that empowers gifted learners to academically excel through experiences of student, faculty, staff, and community cooperation. We strive to prepare each gifted learner to maximize critical and creative thinking skills in a positive, fulfilling, and interactive environment

VISION

All HISD gifted learners will become globally competitive and exceed the future challenges of a diverse world through receipt of an equitable education and accelerated learning experiences that empower voice and choice through enduring learning experiences.

WHAT IS GIFTED AND TALENTED (G/T)?

A “gifted and talented” student is a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who:

- Exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- Possesses an unusual capacity for leadership;
- Excels in a specific academic field.

(Texas Education Code §29.121)



STATE GOAL FOR SERVICES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

Students who participate in services designed for Gifted and Talented students will demonstrate skills in self-directed learning, thinking, research, and communication as evidenced by the development of innovative products and performances that reflect individuality and creativity, and are advanced in relation to students of similar age, experience or environment.

High school graduates who have participated in services for Gifted and Talented students will have produced products and performances of professional quality as part of their program services.

(Texas Education Agency, 2009, p.v.)



CORE BELIEFS

Houston ISD Gifted and Talented program and services support the following beliefs:

- *Each learner has inherent dignity and the right to equitable and individualized educational and gifted identification experiences.*
- *Excellence in learning is directly related to excellence in teaching.*
- *Creativity, innovation, and initiative are encouraged and celebrated.*
- *The educational environment must be responsive to change.*
- *Student growth occurs when students are actively engaged in rigorous and relevant learning experiences that lead to publishable and patentable products.*
- *Every gifted learner can strengthen critical and creative thinking skills, academic outcomes, and social/emotional connections.*
- *Learning, academic outcomes, and social and emotional growth are the primary focus of all decisions.*



DISTRICT POLICY

Houston ISD Board Policies define Gifted and Talented services. These include the following:

DMA (Legal) Professional Development- Required staff development
DMA (Local) Professional Development- District needs to offer training.

EK (Local) - Refers to making decisions about educational programs. Special testing: be required by state or federal guidelines; be required for admission into special instructional programs.

EH (Regulation)- Curriculum Design

EHDD (Local)-Texas virtual school network, partnership programs, other college-level courses

EHDD (Legal)- Alternative methods for credit-notify parents of earning college credit

FDB (Local) - Intra-district transfers

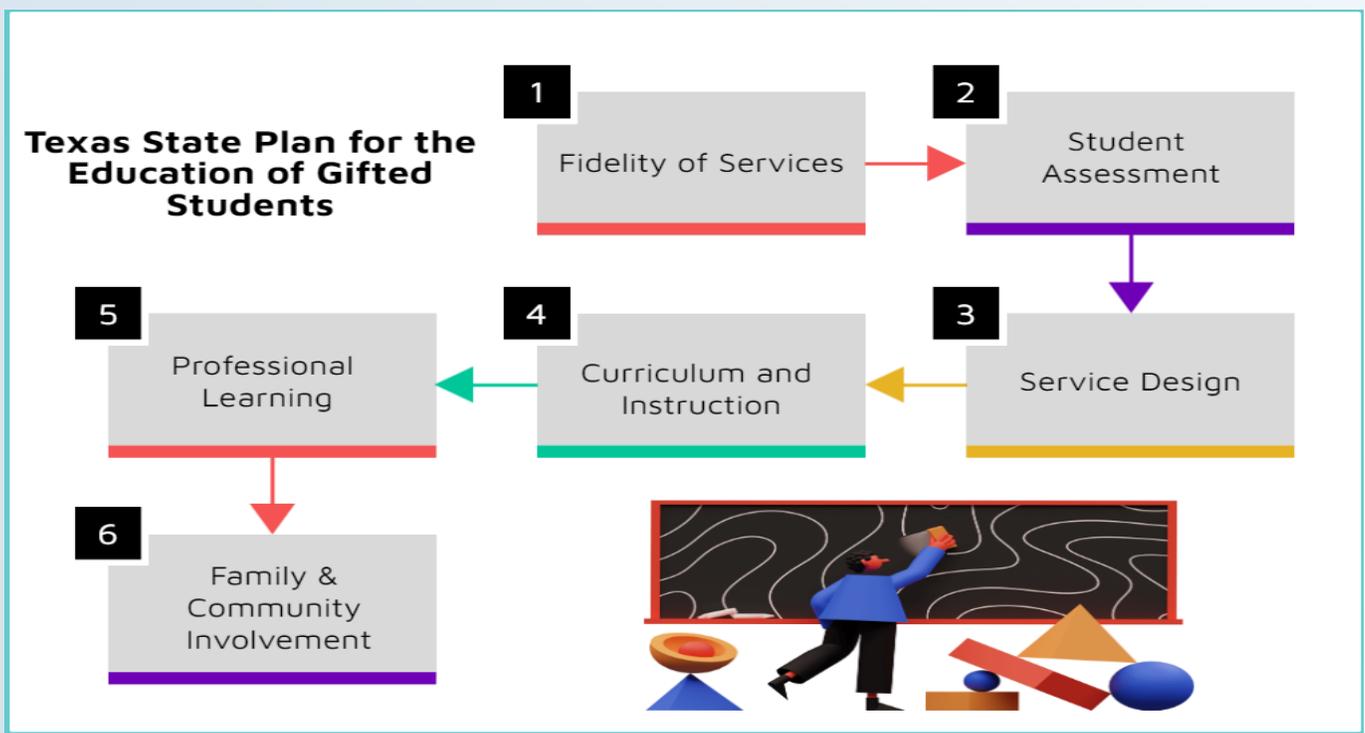
FNG (Local) - Complaints about placement



Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted Students

This state plan for the education of gifted/talented students in Texas first offers a rationale and goal and then defines the state and district roles for educating gifted students. The plan provides guidelines for use by local district personnel in the development of gifted programs that meet state requirements. These guidelines include

- Fidelity of Services
- Student Assessment
- Service Design
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Professional Learning
- Family and Community Involvement



STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Gifted/talented identification procedures and progress monitoring allow students to demonstrate and develop their diverse talents and abilities. (Texas Plan, TEA, 2009).

Houston ISD Gifted Education Identification of Gifted Students

Students entering grades K—12 can be referred for evaluation to receive Gifted and Talented services in their neighborhood (zoned) school through the Gifted and Talented application. The Gifted and Talented identification process can be initiated in four ways:

1. Parent nomination - parents complete request online
2. Teacher nomination - teachers can contact the G/T coordinator requesting a student be evaluated for G/T testing
3. Student self nomination - student can contact the G/T coordinator requesting they be evaluated for G/T testing
4. District generated rosters of G/T eligible students - G/T Campus Committee roster reviews data from previous STAAR scores or other district test data to refer students for G/T testing

Consent to be evaluated for Gifted and Talented services must be provided by the parent when anyone other than a parent makes the referral.

Communication of the G/T testing window occurs via campus and district websites, campus newsletters, and other communications sent by the District and campuses.

Houston ISD Gifted Education Qualification Process

Determination of eligibility is based on the HISD G/T Identification Matrix. HISD utilizes two G/T Identification Matrices, one for Entering Kindergarten applicants and the other for students currently in grades K-12.

G/T identification is determined by points obtained from qualitative and quantitative data based on three or more various criteria:

- ◆ Achievement Test
- ◆ Abilities Test
- ◆ Other district qualifiers

All scores are entered and converted into points on HISD's G/T Identification Matrix. Parents are notified in writing of the District G/T Evaluation determination.

A student that has been evaluated and does not qualify will be eligible for reassessment in one calendar school year.



Gifted and Talented Testing

What is the testing process for my child to qualify for Gifted and Talented Services?

G/T academic testing is available to all enrolled or zoned HISD students from Entering Kindergarten/Pre-K4 through 12th grade if they are referred for evaluation by a teacher, parent, or the student themselves. HISD also offers testing for 5th and 8th grade students who scored above the 80th percentile on MAP testing in math or reading. Additionally, all HISD 2nd-grade students are tested as part of a universal testing process.

Parents can request testing through the district's "Request to Test" link.

All assessments are administered during pre-established testing schedules/timelines by trained HISD staff at the student's enrolled or zoned HISD campus. The G/T testing dates include the following tests:

- Pre-K4/Entering Kindergarten
- Universal 2nd Grade
- HISD 5th and 8th grade students who scored above the 80th percentile on MAP testing in math or reading
- Kindergarten - Twelfth Grade

Pre-K4/Entering Kindergarten Testing

Students must be five years old on or before September 1st of the eligible enrollment school year to be qualified for Entering Kindergarten Gifted and Talented testing.

How eligible students initiate participation in Entering Kindergarten G/T testing:

- Entering Kindergarten testing will be done at the student's enrolled or zoned HISD campus.
- If applying for Vanguard Magnet Schools, parents must apply through Office of School Choice

Universal Second Grade Testing

- All enrolled HISD second grade students not currently G/T-identified are assessed.
- No request is required for HISD enrolled second grade students, unless the student is not G/T identified in both math and reading and looking to gain identification in the missed area.
- If applying for Vanguard Magnet Schools, parents must apply through Office of School Choice

Kindergarten—Twelfth Grade Testing

- All enrolled HISD K—12 students not currently G/T-identified that are referred for evaluation by a teacher, parent, or the student themselves are assessed.
- All enrolled HISD 5th and 8th grade students who scored above the 80th percentile on MAP testing in math or reading are assessed.
- If student is not enrolled in HISD, with a parent request, they are assessed at their zoned HISD campus.
- If applying for Vanguard Magnet Schools, parents must apply through Office of School Choice

Identification

Students identified as Gifted and Talented can be qualified in 3 different categories:

Qualification Categories:		
Both Content Areas	1 Content Area	1 Content Area
Reading/Language Arts	Reading/Language Arts	Math
Math	<i>*Receives services in Social Studies</i>	<i>*Receives services in Science</i>
* To apply to any Vanguard magnet program, your child must qualify in both Math and Reading. If your child qualifies in only one area (either math OR reading), they are not eligible to apply to a Vanguard magnet program.		

Appeals

A parent may appeal an identification decision by submitting in the following manner:

Level I (Campus) - If a parent wishes to appeal the results, they are required to appeal in writing and submit it to the appealing campus' G/T coordinator no later than 10 school days of receipt of the "Did Not Qualify (DNQ)" letter.

Level II (G/T Department) - After completing the first level of appeal, the parent may initiate a second level of appeal to the G/T Department. Second level appeals to the G/T Department must be made within 15 school days from the date of the Level I campus notification of placement or non-placement letter in the G/T program. Appeals must be made in writing through the G/T Department Appeals Form. HISD G/T Department Appeals decisions are final. Parents will be notified of the appeal decision made by the office of the Gifted and Talented Department.

The G/T Department holds appeals meetings to review student data against any new evidence submitted and their appeals decision will be given within fifteen (15) school days of the appeals meeting.

Conditions for an Appeal

- Illness during testing with documentation of the illness
- Testing irregularity – an inequitable or inappropriate application during the testing process is alleged or documented accommodations were not provided
- Language Barrier - student did not receive ELL accommodation (*testing site will refer to documentation provided if concerns arise*)

SERVICE DESIGN

A flexible system of viable service options provides a research-based learning continuum that is developed and consistently implemented throughout the district to meet the needs and reinforce the strengths and interests of gifted/talented students. (Texas Plan, TEA, 2009)

What services does HISD offer for gifted and talented students?

All campuses in the Houston Independent School District offer Gifted and Talented (G/T) services to students in grades K-12. These services are designed to meet the specific needs of G/T students in their neighborhood (zoned) schools. HISD gifted curriculum is differentiated by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the general school program, utilizing higher-level thinking skills, and developing

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GIFTED AND TALENTED NEIGHBORHOOD (ZONED) AND VANGUARD MAGNET PROGRAMS?

Gifted and Talented Neighborhood Programs are designed to provide G/T services on campus for all G/T students who are enrolled at that campus. Except for a few unique campuses such as early childhood learning centers and some charter schools, all HISD schools offer a G/T Neighborhood program.

Vanguard Magnet Programs offer accelerated learning to challenge students beyond their grade level. Vanguard Magnet schools provide services to their zoned G/T students and students on a Vanguard Magnet transfer. There are ten elementary Vanguard Magnet schools, five Vanguard middle schools, and one Vanguard Magnet high school.

Vanguard Magnet Programs

Elementary Schools

- Askew ES
- Carrillo ES
- DeZavala ES
- Herod ES
- Oak Forest ES
- River Oaks ES
- Roosevelt ES
- Travis ES
- TH Rogers
- Windsor Village

Middle Schools

- Black MS
- Burbank MS
- Hamilton MS
- Lanier MS
- TH Rogers

High School

- Carnegie HS

**To apply to any Vanguard magnet program, your child must qualify in both Math and Reading. If your child qualifies in only one area (either math OR reading), they are not eligible to apply to a Vanguard magnet program.*



Gifted and Talented Services Timeline

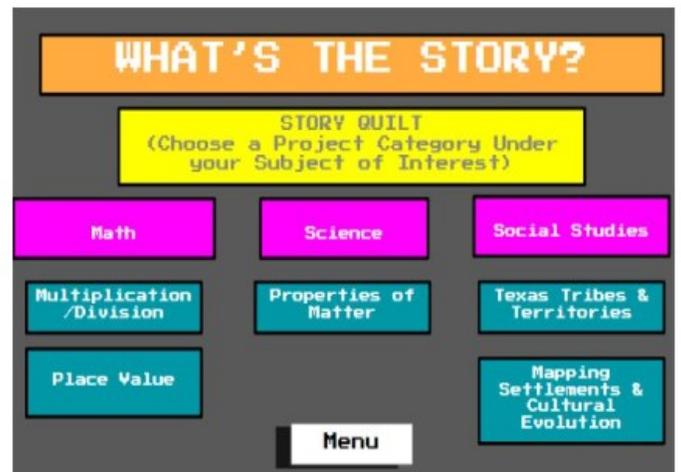
Students in grades 1 – 12 who are identified to receive Gifted and Talented services in HISD will begin services the following school year. Kindergarten students will begin receiving services by **March 1** of the current school year. Services are provided in the four core areas according to each student’s identification.

Delivery of Services

All HISD campuses offer Gifted and Talented services in various ways to G/T students. Students identified in the Gifted and Talented Program will be:

- Provided opportunities for acceleration in areas of exceptional strength
- Provided differentiated instruction in the foundation curricular areas by trained G/T classroom teachers
- Served in the G/T classrooms through modifications by adding depth and complexity to the state/district curriculum
- Encouraged to exercise creativity and higher-level thinking

G/T Enrichment Projects



The projects are designed to enhance learning in core subject areas, encourage activities that span multiple subjects, and provide opportunities for advanced learning. Students in grades 3rd through 10th grades will be able to participate in three enrichment projects per grade cycle, which are inspired by the Texas Performance Standards Projects. These projects are aligned with TEKS standards, offer flexible activities, and emphasize critical thinking skills, student choice, independent research, and high-quality products and presentations.

Elementary Service Design

Cluster Grouping

Grouping Gifted and Talented students together provides opportunities for them to work with cognitive peers. Identified students in grades K – 5 should be in cluster groups of 3 - 4 students or more with Gifted and Talented trained teachers.

Cluster grouping places a select number of Gifted and Talented students together for instruction in the appropriate content area(s) for which they have been identified.

The Gifted and Talented-trained teacher adapts the curriculum and environment for their Gifted and Talented learners with strategies such as:

- ◆ Curricular compacting
- ◆ Lesson Differentiation to increase depth and complexity, and
- ◆ Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP).

“Power/Genius” Hour

Innovation Hour is a student-driven inquiry process (or program) that encourages students to learn about and create based on their passions. The curriculum can support a differentiated learning experience for each student and integrate depth, complexity, and choice. It supports students in their strive to exhibit the attributes defined by the state goal of learning opportunities including:

- ◆ Unique differentiated curriculum
- ◆ Independent research

Secondary Service Design

Advanced Courses

Placing gifted students in Advance classes puts them in rigorous and college level courses designed to promote acceleration.

- It is recommended that G/T students in grades 6 – 12 are enrolled in the Advanced course offered in the academic fields for which they are identified.
- Core Advanced courses or AP teachers who teach G/T students are G/T trained and provide differentiated instruction for G/T students according to their need.

More information may be obtained through the HISD Postsecondary Programming Webpage



FAMILY & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The district involves family and community members in services designed for gifted/talented students throughout the school year.

Houston ISD believes “that meaningful engagement with the community is important in all major decision-making”. The Gifted and Talented Department will demonstrate the development of systems that will be used to build, maintain and sustain a positive culture and climate and effective relationships among all stakeholders for the ongoing improvement of gifted and talented services.

G/T Parent Advisory

The Houston ISD G/T Parent Advisory Committee is facilitated through GATES (Gifted and Talented Education Supporters) and a newly formed extension of the District’s programs and services for gifted learners. Members of GATES shall be parents or guardians of children identified for gifted services in Houston ISD. Members may serve up to three years per campus as determined by the principal. GATES members will collaborate with the Gifted and Talented Department to ensure high-quality programming and services for gifted learners as well as provide ongoing feedback for continuous improvement of services.



Houston ISD G/T Expo

As stated in the Texas State Plan school districts shall provide an array of learning opportunities for gifted/talented students in kindergarten through Grade 12 and shall inform parents of the opportunities.

In HISD, a G/T Expo is held that allows students to present their projects. Students start at a campus G/T Showcase and possibly at the HISD G/T Expo.

Options must include:

- Instructional and organizational patterns that enable identified students to work together as a group, to work with other students, and to work independently.
- A continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced-level products and performances.
- In-school and, when possible, out-of-school options relevant to the student's area of strength that are available during the entire school year.
- Opportunities to accelerate in areas of strength.

GT Showcase and Expo Topics

Elementary

- Interest Inventory
- Student Influenced Topics
- Teacher given categories and student select topics
- Passion Projects
- Texas Performance Standards Projects (TPSP)

Secondary

- Student Selected Topics
- Student Influenced Topics
- Interest Inventories
- Texas Performance Standards Projects (TPSP)
- Mentor Influenced Topics

Campus G/T Showcase: The Campus G/T Showcase will be held anytime before the district G/T Expo.

District G/T Expo: The top 3 winners (Individual or Group projects) will be invited to participate in the District Expo.



G/T Resources



TEXAS ASSOCIATION FOR THE
GIFTED & TALENTED

Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented
<https://www.txgifted.org/>



Texas Performance Standards Project
(TPSP)
<https://www.texaspsp.org/>



Texas Education Agency

Texas Education Agency

<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/gifted-and-talented-education>



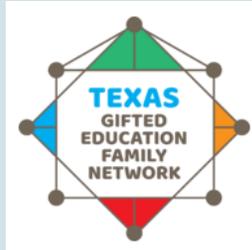
EQUITY IN GIFTED/
TALENTED EDUCATION

Equity in G/T
<http://www.txgifted.org>



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
Gifted Children

National Association for Gifted Children
<http://www.nagc.org>



TEXAS
GIFTED
EDUCATION
FAMILY
NETWORK

Gifted Education Family Network
https://bit.ly/GEFN_SupportGroup

HISD | Gifted and Talented
REVOLUTIONIZING THE WAY WE THINK



GIFTED AND TALENTED FAMILY HANDBOOK

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