



HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Hattie Mae White Educational Support Center

4400 West 18th Street • Houston, Texas 77092-8501

Dan Gohl

Chief Academic Officer

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February 26, 2015

Dear Kindergarten Parents and/or Guardians,

I want to follow up with you regarding a letter that was sent home to you last week about a development in the Gifted and Talented identification process for current kindergartners.

The development was related to an anomaly found in the scoring of the kindergarten Iowa exam. The test — one of several factors used to identify students for HISD's Gifted and Talented Program — places students on a national scale and shows how they compare with their peers across the nation. In addition to the Iowa test, HISD also uses student report cards, teacher recommendations, and student performance on the Cognitive Abilities Test, to identify G/T students.

We learned about the anomaly in early February and since have been working closely with the makers of the Iowa exam to understand the issue and develop an acceptable solution.

Through this process, we were able to verify that the Iowa test, itself, gives an accurate measure of student achievement. The anomaly was caused by the national pool of students to which HISD students were compared. Using that pool, HISD kindergarten students artificially ranked, on average, in the 91st percentile nationally.

Relying on those elevated percentile rankings to help identify gifted and talented students would have resulted in the majority of our kindergarten students being placed in the G/T program. Based on our students' performance on other tests, the district found the percentile ranking to be non-credible.

To correct this issue, we plan to re-normalize the scores against a pool of our students' peers — fellow HISD students. We believe, as do the makers of the Iowa exam, that this is an acceptable solution for this year.

New rankings will be provided soon. Parents who have applied for their children to be admitted into Vanguard magnet programs for G/T students will be notified of the results at the end of March.

Should you have any questions, please contact your school's gifted and talented coordinator or principal, or email GT@HoustonISD.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel W. Gohl".

Dan Gohl

Chief Academic Officer

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