

Alto I.S.D.

Gifted & Talented Handbook

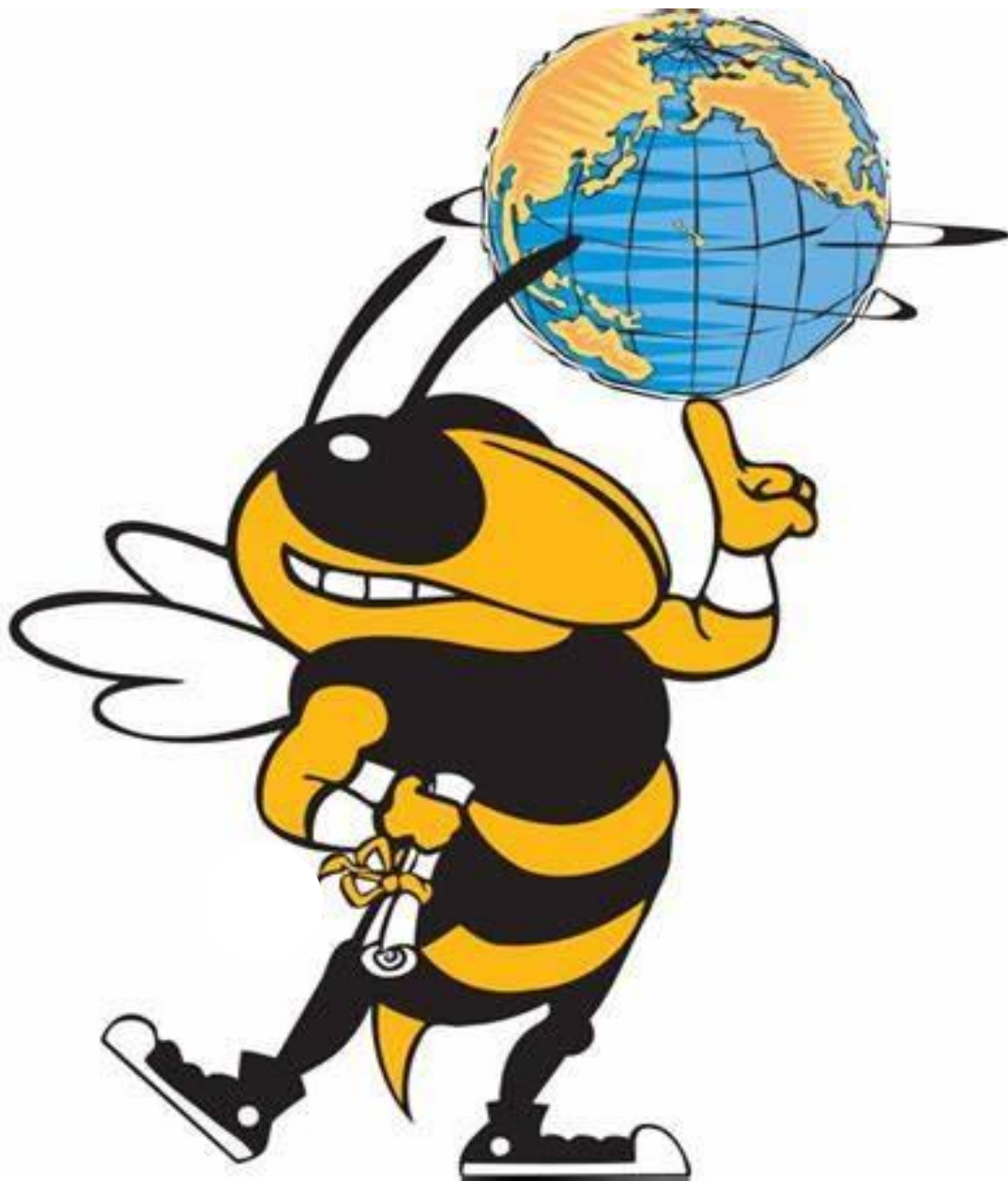


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Preface

Alto Independent School District is committed to providing the curriculum to meet the needs of the gifted student. This document presents the official policies, processes, and procedures for organizing, operating, and evaluating the Gifted and Talented Program at Alto ISD. Local board policies are developed that are consistent with State Board of Education rules on credit by examination (19 TAC §74.24) and early high school graduation opportunities (TEC §56.203).

Definition of Gifted and Talented Students

A gifted/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; or
- Excels in a specific academic field. (Texas Education Code § 29.121)

Characteristics Related to Potential Giftedness

There are certain student characteristics related to potential giftedness that can be validly and reliably appraised by teachers, parents, and others who have extended opportunities to observe students.

Examples are listed below:

- Advanced use of language
- Quality of student's questions
- Quality of examples, illustrations, or elaboration
- Dynamic systematic problem-solving strategies
- Quantitative expressions and reasoning
- Skill level significantly above grade-level expectation
- Innovative use of materials
- Depth and breadth of information in a particular area
- Unusual collection or hobbies
- High level of task commitment
- Absorption in intellectual tasks
- Extensive exploratory behavior
- Preference for complex tasks

Hagen, Elizabeth. (1980). Identification of the Gifted. Teachers College, Columbia University, p.23-26

The Bright / Gifted Child
By Janice Szabos
Challenge Magazine Issue 34

Bright Child

Knows the answers
Interested
Attentive
Has good ideas
Works hard
Answers the questions
Top group
Listens with interest
Learns with ease
6 to 8 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas
Enjoys peers
Grasps the meaning
Completes assignments
Receptive
Copies accurately
Enjoys school
Absorbs information
Technician
Good memorizer
Enjoys sequential presentation
Alert
Pleased with own learning

Gifted Learner

Asks the questions
Highly curious
Mentally and physically involved
Has wild, silly ideas
Plays around, yet tests well
Discusses in detail, elaborates
Beyond the group
Shows strong feelings/ opinions
Already know
1 to 2 repetitions for mastery
Constructs abstractions
Enjoys adults
Draws inferences
Initiates projects
Intense
Creates a new design
Enjoys learning
Manipulates information
Inventor
Good guesser
Thrives on complexity
Keenly observant
Highly self-critical

Philosophy/ Rationale

The philosophy of Alto Independent School District reflects an understanding of the uniqueness of individual needs. Because the learning characteristics of gifted and talented students dictate learning experiences that differentiate from those provided for them in the regular school program, the district recognizes that special provisions must be made for these students in order to stimulate and maximize their achievement. Those identified as gifted and talented through the Alto ISD screening process are served through programs and courses designed to meet their unique social, emotional, and intellectual needs.

Program Objectives

The Alto Independent School District will:

- assure all students equal opportunities to be screened, identified, and served in the Gifted and Talented program;
- utilize a differentiated program that will meet the diversified needs of the identified students;
- provide curriculum and instruction that meets the needs of gifted and talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the general school program;
- develop the skills for initiating, planning, and conducting independent research;
- provide opportunity for academically talented students to associate with and share with peers of similar abilities;
- encourage community and family participation in services designed for gifted and talented students.

Program Description

- The Alto Independent School District Gifted and Talented Program is designed for students who are identified as gifted and talented according to Alto ISD's identification procedure. Those identified as gifted through the Alto ISD screening process are served through programs and courses designed to meet their unique social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
- Emphasis will be placed on providing a learning environment and activities that foster the development of higher order thinking skills, creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, and communication skills. Students will be exposed to experiences and information that are outside the bounds of the regular curriculum and will be encouraged to develop advanced level products and performances. In addition, each student will be assisted in the development of a healthy self-concept and relationship with peers.

- The district shall provide an array of learning opportunities for gifted and talented students in kindergarten through grade 12 and shall inform parents of the opportunities.

Options shall include:

1. Challenging learning experiences that emphasize content from the four (4) core academic areas.
2. Instructional and organizational patterns that enable identified students to work together as a group, to work with other students, and to work independently. (TAC §89.3.1)
3. A continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced-level products and performances. (TAC §89.3.2)
4. Opportunities to accelerate in areas of strength. (TAC §89.3.4)

Services

The Gifted and Talented program delivery options may include, but not be limited to, inclusion, pull-out, independent study, cooperative learning, and honors classes at the secondary level. Also ISD administrators, counselors, and teachers will actively facilitate accelerated options. Within the delivery options curriculum differentiation strategies will be utilized.

Identification

Identification and selection for the gifted and talented program will be determined through a process of three steps:

1. Nomination
2. Screening
3. Selection Committee

Nominations

Students in grades K-12 shall be assessed and, if identified, provided gifted and talented services (19 TAC § 89.1 (2)). Nominations will be obtained by one of the following:

1. Written policies on student identification for Gifted and Talented services are approved by the district board of trustees and disseminated to all parents (19 TAC §89.1).
2. Kindergarten students will be nominated at the beginning of the second semester.

3. A continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced-level products and performances (TPSP) (19 TAC § 89.3 (2)).
4. Nominations of students in grades 5-12 will be accepted (once a semester at the secondary level) during the month of notification will be made by the end of May.

Students may only be nominated and assessed only once during a given academic year. The counselor will be responsible for dissemination and collecting the nomination forms. A list and dates of nominations will be maintained and considered by the screening committee.

Assessments

Screenings will be conducted on each student nominated for the gifted and talented program. Written parental consent (from both parents) shall be obtained before any special testing or individual assessment is conducted as part of the screening and identification process. Criteria used in the screening process will include, but not limited to, measures collected from multiple sources:

- a. Aptitude Test
- b. Achievement Test (STARR Test)
- c. Teacher Inventory
- d. Parent Inventory
- e. Student Work Portfolio

Students will be assessed in languages they understand or with nonverbal based tests. Data collected through both quantitative and qualitative assessments shall be included in a matrix/ profile and measured according to the established criteria to determine eligibility for the program. If services are available in leadership, artistic areas, and creativity, a minimum of three criteria are used for assessment. Student anonymity shall be maintained during the selection process. Parents and students shall be notified in writing upon selection of the student for the Gifted and Talented program. Participation in any program or service provided for gifted students is voluntary.

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

Selection Committee

A selection committee shall evaluate each nominated student according to the established criteria and shall select those students for whom Gifted and Talented program placement is the most appropriate educational setting. The committee shall be composed of at least three local district or campus educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students. Final determination of students' need for Gifted and Talented services is made by a committee of at least three local district or campus educators whom have received training in the nature and needs of gifted and talented students and who have met and reviewed the individual student data (19 TAC §89.1(4)).

Furloughs

Students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the structure of the gifted and talented program may be placed on furlough by the selection committee. The purpose of such a furlough is to provide the student an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the selection committee. A furlough also may be granted at the request of the student and/ or parent. Unusual reasons for furloughs will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

A student may be furloughed for short periods of time deemed appropriate by the selection committee. Student furloughs may be granted to allow for a leave of absence from the Gifted and Talented program for specified reasons and for a certain period of time without being exited. Scheduling conflicts will also be considered for that semester furlough. At the end of the furlough, the student's progress shall be reassessed, and the student may reenter the gifted program, be removed from the program, or be placed on another furlough. A furlough period is less than two years. A student who is out of the gifted and talented program for a period of two years must go through the formal identification process according to district procedures.

Exiting

Student performances in the Gifted and Talented program shall be monitored. A student shall be removed from the program at any time the selection committee determines it is in the student's best interest. If student or parent request removal from the program, the selection committee shall meet with the parent and/ or student before honoring the request. A conference shall be held with the student and the parent as soon as the selection committee perceives a problem that could necessitate exit from the program. The data and results of the conference should be recorded and placed in the student's file. If the student does not meet conditions agreed upon in the conference, exit will be recommended. Students exiting by self or parent request may

reenter the gifted and talented program only by completing the formal identification process according to district procedures.

Reasons for possible exit from the program include academic performance, personal and social stress, and behavior. The student's choice not to participate in the gifted and talented program will be considered refusal of service and the student will automatically be exited from the program. A student may exit the Gifted and Talented program by a formal meeting of the selection committee. Approval for exiting the Gifted and Talented program may be based on one or more of the following data:

- Teacher recommendation to the selection committee based on observations of performance or products.
- Counselor recommendation to the selection committee based on interviews, observations, or developmental data on file.
- Parental request for withdrawal from the gifted and talented program.
- Student request, with parental permission, for withdrawal from the Gifted and Talented program.

Reassessment

The Alto Independent School District shall not perform routine reassessments.

Transfer Students

When a student identified as gifted by a previous school district transfers into Alto ISD, the student's records shall be reviewed by the selection committee to determine if placement in the District's program for gifted and talented students is appropriate.

The committee shall make its determination within 30 days of the student's enrollment in the District and shall base its decision on the transferred records, observation reports of the District teachers who instruct the student, and student/ parent conferences. Previous placement is positively considered during the identification process but does not guarantee admission.

Provisions regarding transfer students, furloughs, reassessment, exiting or students from program services, and appeals of district decisions regarding program placement are included in board-approved policy (19 TAC § 89.1 (5)).

Appeals

Parents or students may appeal any final decision of the selection committee regarding selection for or removal from the Gifted and Talented program. Appeals shall be made first to the selection committee.

Parent and Community Involvement

Alto Independent School District believes that education of the academically talented acquires a strong partnership between parents, community, and teachers and seeks to promote the active involvement and support of parents and community through the following measures:

- Parents and community involvement will be encouraged through newsletters and meeting concerning activities or projects.
- Information concerning the gifted and talented program will be disseminated to parents via periodic communications.
- Identification procedures will be printed in the student handbook.
- Parents and community members will participate in the identification process by nominating prospective students for the Gifted and Talented program.
- Parents will be given the opportunity to complete a program evaluation survey each year.

Program Evaluation

The Alto ISD School board will review the Gifted and Talented program based on ongoing formative and summative assessments for substantive program improvement and development. Alto ISD shall ensure that student assessment and services comply with accountability standards included in the Texas State Plan for the Education of gifted and talented students. (19 TSC §89.5). The gifted and talented program shall be evaluated annually, and evaluation information shall be shared with board members, administrators, counselors, teachers, students, parents, community members. Provisions to improve services to gifted/talented students are included in district and campus improvement plans (TEC §11.251-11.253).

Professional Development

Staff members who work with students in the Gifted and Talented program will be encouraged to attend professional conferences and workshops for the purpose of improving competencies in instructional strategies and program development.

Alto ISD shall ensure:

- The majority of members of the selection committee will meet the requirements of completing thirty hours of Gifted and Talented training within one semester (19 TAC §89.2(1), and are current with the six-hour update training as required in (19 TAC §89.2(2)).

- Administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions have a minimum of six hour of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted and talented students and program options for gifted and talented students (19 TAC §89. 2(4)).

Curriculum

The curriculum for gifted and talented students consists of the content to be learned and the processes that make learning possible. Curriculum for the academically talented must be differentiated from that in the regular classroom and congruent with the characteristics of gifted children. The curriculum will be based on the following guidelines:

- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
- Individual needs, abilities, and interests
- Activities that emphasize the development of thinking skills rather than mere accumulation of knowledge.
- Development of oral and written communication skills.
- Development of higher order thinking skills.
- Divergent and creative thinking skills.
- Active involvement of the learner.
- Development of independent and self-direct learning skills.
- Development of problem-solving skills, including investigation and exploration of real problems.
- Development of a healthy self-concept and relationship with peers.

Alto Independent School District shall provide an array of learning opportunities that are commensurate with the abilities of gifted and talented students, and that emphasize content in the four core academic areas(19 TAC §89.3). Services are available during the school day as well as the entire school year. Parents will be informed of these opportunities, and shall include:

1. Challenging learning experiences that emphasize content from the four core academic areas intellectual, creative or artistic areas; leadership; and specific academic fields.
2. Instructional and organizational patterns that enable identified students to work together as a group, to work with other students, and to work independently.
3. A continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced-level products and performances.
4. Opportunities to accelerate in areas of strength.

Funding

No more than 45% of state funds allocated for gifted/talented education is spent on indirect costs as defined in the Financial Accounting and Reporting Module (Financial Accountability Resource Guide). At least 55% of the funds allocated to gifted/talented education is spent on assessment and services for gifted students (19 TAC §105.11).

Organizational Plan

School Board:

- Approves all policies regarding the gifted and talented program.

Superintendent:

- Approves and recommends all policies regarding the plan for gifted and talented education
- Approves selection of program personnel.
- Makes notification regarding revision of program policies and procedures.

Principals:

- Evaluate program and staff.
- Collect appeals and recommendations for program involvement.
- Serve on the selection committee.
- Make recommendations for selection of program personnel.

Counselors:

- Provide assistance in testing/ interpretation of test scores.
- Serve on the selection committee.
- Assist teachers with students' development of a healthy self-concept and relationship with peers.
- Collect and assemble data for screening.
- Maintain students' files and records.
- Procure records for transfer students.

Gifted and Talented Faculty:

- Evaluate the program
- Develop curriculum providing opportunity for cognitive and affective growth.
- Provide instruction for students in the Gifted and Talented program.
- Evaluate students and determine academic growth.
- Communicate information to students and parents.
- Select materials for the program.
- Develop and maintain resource file.

Glossary of Terms Related to Gifted and Talented Program

AREA OF GIFTEDNESS the specific set of abilities in which a student performs or shows potential to perform at a remarkably high level of accomplishment.

ARRAY OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES a menu of challenging activities or opportunities that fit the unique interests and abilities of advanced-level students.

ARTISTICALLY GIFTED possessing outstanding ability in the visual and/or performing arts.

COMPLEXITY extension of content in, between, and across disciplines through the study of themes, problems, and issues; seeing relationships between and among ideas in/within the topic, discipline, and disciplines; examining relationships in, between, and across disciplines over time and from multiple points of view.

CONTINUUM OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES articulated intellectual, artistic, creative, and/or leadership activities and opportunities that build upon one another each year a student is in school.

CREATIVELY GIFTED possessing outstanding imagination, thinking ability, innovative or creative reasoning ability, ability in problem solving, and/or high attainment in original or creative thinking.

DEPTH exploration of content within a discipline to include analyzing from the concrete to the abstract, familiar to the unfamiliar, known to the unknown; exploring the discipline by going beyond facts and concepts into generalizations, principles, theories, laws; investigating the layers of experience within a discipline through details, patterns, trends, unanswered questions, and/or ethical considerations.

DIFFERENTIATION modification of curriculum and instruction according to content, pacing, and/or product to meet unique student needs in the classroom

DIVERSITY the presence of difference between individuals and among groups including but not limited to age, socioeconomics, education, race and ethnicity, gender, culture, and religious beliefs.

FOUNDATION CURRICULAR AREAS English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, and social studies.

FURLOUGH a leave of absence from program services.

GIFTED IN LEADERSHIP possessing the natural ability to influence others; possessing skills in interpersonal relationships demonstrated, for example, by outstanding ability in such activities as student government.

GIFTED IN SPECIFIC ACADEMIC FIELDS possessing superior ability or potential in a specific course of study such as English language arts/reading, mathematics, science, or social studies.

GIFTED/TALENTED SERVICES services and activities not ordinarily provided by the school that are specifically designed to fully develop the capabilities of students who give evidence of high achievement or capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity.

INDEPENDENT STUDY self-directed learning strategy where the teacher acts as guide or facilitator, and the student plays a more active role in designing and managing his or her own learning.

INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED possessing superior intelligence, with potential or demonstrated accomplishments in several fields of study; ability to perform complex mental tasks.

MENTORSHIP community member who shares his or her expertise with a student of similar career or field-of-study aspirations.

QUALITATIVE MEASURES performance indicators that cannot be recorded numerically and that include observations, anecdotal records, checklists, interviews, student products, performances, etc.

QUANTITATIVE MEASURES performance indicators that can be expressed in terms of definite numbers or amounts such as scores on achievement tests.

TEXAS PERFORMANCE STANDARDS PROJECT (TPSP) statewide standards and assessment system which includes instructional materials designed to provide assistance as districts achieve the state goal for gifted/talented students (complete information at <http://www.texaspsp.org/>).

*TEXAS STATE PLAN FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS
2009*