

# **Advanced Academics Gifted and Talented Program Guide**

A Handbook for Parents, Community Members,  
and Campus Personnel

**Sheldon**  **ISD**

Every Child, Every Day



[www.sheldonisd.com](http://www.sheldonisd.com)

Revised May 2020

## **PHILOSOPHY OF THE GIFTED/TALENTED PROGRAM**

### **Beliefs**

- We believe that gifted/talented students are enthusiastic about learning and solving problems in unique ways.
- We believe that gifted/talented students require support from educators and mentors who are professionally trained in meeting their unique emotional, social, and academic needs.
- We believe that appropriate services for gifted/talented students allow them to work successfully alone, with other gifted students, and with students not identified as gifted.
- We believe that gifted/talented students come from all races, socio-economic strata, geographic locales, and environments.
- We believe that gifted/talented students exhibit unique needs and possess unusual abilities and talents which warrant recognition and nurturing.
- We believe that the education of gifted/talented students involves the successful collaboration of educators, community members, parents, mentors, and the students themselves.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of Sheldon ISD's gifted and talented program aligns with the mission of the district. Through the collaboration of parents, educators, students, and the community, Sheldon ISD will provide gifted/talented students with experiences that challenge them to use inquiry, discovery, and creative problem solving as they develop their unique talents and explore real-world issues.

### **Program Goals**

- Through interactions with other gifted peers, as well as with individuals of all abilities, gifted/talented students will develop healthy self-concepts regarding their giftedness.
- Gifted/talented students will become self-directed learners who gather, interpret, and share information from multiple and varied resources and exhibit creative and critical thinking involving analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Through differentiated instruction, a continuum of learning experiences, advanced content, and access to a variety of school and community resources, gifted/talented students will develop and present authentic, sophisticated products appropriate to their giftedness.
- Gifted/talented students will develop a conceptual understanding of universal issues, problems, and themes within and between disciplines.

## **GIFTED/TALENTED DEFINITION**

### **Texas Education Code 29.123 Definition of Gifted/Talented:**

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:

- (1) exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- (2) possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- (3) a child who excels in a specific academic field.

## **PROGRAM DESIGN**

Texas school districts are required to provide an array of learning opportunities for gifted/talented students in kindergarten through grade 12 and to inform parents of such opportunities. To develop and evaluate services for gifted/talented students, Sheldon ISD adheres to the guidelines in the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (adopted in April 2019).

To meet the specific needs of gifted/talented students, Sheldon ISD provides opportunities for Gifted/Talented (G/T) students to participate in activities that are academically appropriate and intellectually challenging. Services include the following:

- Differentiation of the curriculum's products, processes, and content
- Modifications of instructional pacing, depth, and complexity
- Teachers who meet or exceed state requirements for gifted and talented professional development
- Opportunities for students to develop advanced-level products and/or performances such as those provided through the Texas Performance Standards Project
- Opportunities for students to participate in academic competitions, such as UIL, AVID Reader, Destination Imagination, and Academic Decathlon. In addition, clubs, electives, competitions, and athletics, serve students with creative or leadership talents.

### **Elementary (K – 5)**

The gifted/talented program at the kindergarten through fifth grade levels is designed to provide differentiated instruction for identified gifted/talented students. Differentiated instruction offers a variety of learning options designed to tap into students' interests and abilities by providing additional depth and complexity to the grade level curriculum. A weekly pull-out program in grades 1-5 supports the social, emotional, creative, and critical thinking needs of gifted/talented students.

**Middle School (6 – 8)**

In grades 6 – 8, teachers trained to work with gifted students serve identified students through Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) courses in science, social studies, mathematics, and English language arts. In addition to the state-mandated gifted and talented professional development requirements, Pre-AP teachers also receive professional development in the strategies and national standards developed by The College Board. If a Pre-AP course is not offered in a core content area, gifted/talented students who show potential for excelling are served in clusters within the core curriculum.

**High School (9 - 12)**

In grades 9 – 12, teachers also complete specialized training regarding gifted/talented students, as well as professional development in teaching students in dual enrollment, dual credit, Pre-AP and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The AP Program allows students to take college-level classes as a part of their high school curriculum. These courses offer challenging learning experiences and maintain national standards set by The College Board. Students who meet specific criteria set by each college or university on an AP Exam receive credit for specific college courses. Sheldon ISD offers Pre-AP and AP courses in core areas. Additional opportunities for advancement include dual credit courses, credit by exam, and early graduation. For a full listing of courses offered, please refer to the C.E. King High School Handbook. To obtain a copy, contact C.E. King High School.

## **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The district shall annually evaluate the effectiveness of the Gifted/Talented Program, and the results of the evaluation shall be used to modify and update the district and campus improvement plans. Parents will be included in the process, and the evaluation shall be shared with Board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, students in the program, and the community.

## **COMMUNITY AWARENESS**

Sheldon ISD will insure that information about the gifted and talented program is available to parents and community members and that they have an opportunity to develop an understanding of and support for the program.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Sheldon ISD will ensure the following:

- Before assignment to the program for gifted students, teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the Gifted/Talented Program, have obtained a minimum of 30 hours of staff development that includes the assessment and identification, nature and needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted/talented students.
- Teachers without the required training who provide instruction and services that are part of the Gifted/Talented Program will complete the training within one semester.
- Teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of a program for gifted students earn a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education.
- Administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options.

## **GIFTED/TALENTED IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURES**

### **Step 1: Nomination**

- A. Students may be nominated for the gifted and talented program at any time by teachers, counselors, parents, or other interested persons. For example, students may be nominated, using the appropriate district forms, by the following:
- Special program teachers or others who have knowledge of the student
  - Family members and/or community members
  - Students may nominate themselves
- B. Students continuously enrolled in Sheldon ISD may be nominated once each school year.

### **Step 2: Screening**

- A. Opportunities for Screening  
Sheldon ISD shall provide assessment opportunities to complete the screening and identification process for nominated/referred students at least once per school year. Notification of the testing windows will be communicated to parents at the beginning of each school year and placed on the district Gifted and Talented page on [www.sheldonisd.com](http://www.sheldonisd.com). Nominations submitted after the start of a testing window will be considered during the next screening cycle.
- B. Screening Process
- Sheldon ISD will obtain written parental consent before any special testing or individual assessment is conducted as part of the screening and identification process. All student information collected during the screening and identification process shall be an educational record, subject to the protections set out in district policies.
  - Should students who are new to the district request screening, the process will take place during the next district assessment cycle if the appropriate district forms have been completed and signed.
  - Screening is divided into two phases.
    - Phase 1: Data, including parent and teacher inventories, is collected for all nominated students whose parents/guardians have granted permission for assessment. If a student's scores do not meet the Phase 1 standard, he/she will not continue the identification process and will not be identified as gifted.
    - Phase 2: Students who meet district standards for Phase 1 progress to Phase 2, which includes nationally standardized, norm-referenced tests. The tests take place at the student's home campus or district facility.

### **Step 3: Assessment**

- A. Data collected through both objective and subjective assessments shall be measured against the criteria approved by the Board to determine individual eligibility for the program. The criteria shall be specific to the state definition of gifted and talented and shall ensure the fair assessment of students with special needs, such as the culturally different, the economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities.
- B. Assessment tools may include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Ability/Intelligence Tests (e.g. Cognitive Abilities Test, NNAT3)
  - Achievement Tests (e.g. Iowa, Stanford, Apenda)
  - Performance Tests
  - Creativity Assessments
  - Behavioral Checklists
  - Student Products/Performance
  - Planned Experiences
  - Student/parent conferences
- C. A qualified professional with 30 hours of training in gifted/talented education oversees any specialized testing.
- D. A student who did not meet the qualification criteria during a previous school year may be nominated again during subsequent school years; since some assessments are representative of a student's ability for a two-year period or can only be administered once during a twelve-month period, the Gifted/Talented Selection Committee will honor test scores for two years, when applicable.

### **Step 4: Selection**

- A. Student profiles are created from the data collected and are referred to the Sheldon ISD Gifted/Talented Selection Committee. The selection committee shall evaluate each nominated/referred student according to the established criteria and shall identify those students for whom placement in the gifted and talented program is the most appropriate educational setting. The committee shall be composed of at least three professional educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students, as required by law, and shall be established at the elementary level and at the secondary level. The Gifted/Talented Selection Committee is responsible for the balanced use of assessment data. Committee membership requires completion of thirty (30) hours of training in gifted education and the annual six-hour update. In the case of a counselor or administrator, six hours of training in nature/needs and program options is required.
- B. Additional data may be needed to form a more complete picture of the student's abilities. The Gifted/Talented Selection Committee has the responsibility for

requesting additional data and for utilizing it in the selection process. The committee must document the use of additional data that is used to validate selection.

- C. The process for identification of kindergarten students must be complete with services beginning before March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- D. The district shall provide written notification to parents of students who qualify for services through the Gifted/Talented Program. Participation in any program or services provided for gifted students shall be voluntary, and Sheldon ISD shall obtain written permission from the parents before placing a student in a gifted program.
- E. The student's teachers, campus gifted/talented facilitator, PEIMS clerk, and counselor will be notified in writing of the assessment results and the placement decision.
- F. Information regarding submitting appeals will be provided on the placement notification letters.
- G. A parent or student may appeal any final decision of the selection committee regarding selection for or exit from the gifted program. A written appeal must be submitted to the Gifted/Talented Selection Committee on or before the date specified in the parent notification letter. Letters of appeal must include the following:
  - The student's name, grade, and school
  - The parent's name, home address, home and work phone numbers, and email address
  - A brief explanation of the reasons for appeal. This should include why the data collected in the identification process does not reflect the student's abilities.
  - Copies of documentation regarding the student's abilities and strengths (e.g. writing samples, drawings, and work that exhibit abilities well above grade level). Report cards, STAAR assessment results, workbooks/worksheets, and certificates or trophies should not be presented as documentation. Documentation will not be returned to the person submitting the appeal. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with FNG (LOCAL) beginning at Level Two.

### **Step 5: Participation**

Student participation in the Gifted/Talented Program is ongoing, and evaluation is based on student performance in response to program services. Sheldon ISD will not perform routine reassessments.



## **TRANSITION**

### **1. Transfers within Sheldon ISD**

A student who transfers from one campus in the district to the same grade level at another district campus shall continue to receive services in the district's gifted and talented program. The sending school should include any gifted and talented documentation in the student's cumulative folder.

### **2. Students Previously Identified Gifted/Talented by Another School District**

- A. When a student identified as gifted by a previous school district enrolls in Sheldon ISD, the district shall place the student in the district's program for gifted and talented students. The student will be monitored for his/her responses to program services.
- B. New students must provide documentation of being assessed and/or served in a gifted/talented program in the previous district.
- C. New students previously identified as gifted/talented who do not provide adequate documentation of services must participate in the referral and assessment process to be considered for program services.
- D. At the secondary level, the student may be placed in PreAP/AP classes if documented from the previous school.
- E. New students who have not been previously identified as gifted/talented by another district can participate in the next district nomination/assessment cycle if the appropriate district forms have been completed and signed.

### **3. Private and Home Schooled Students**

Private and home-schooled students entering Sheldon ISD for the first time are considered transfer students from another school district and shall follow the procedures in Section 2 (see above).

Sheldon ISD does not offer an assessment program at public expense for non-enrolled students. Students must be enrolled in actual attendance prior to consideration for gifted/talented assessment.

#### **4. Testing from Outside Sources**

Test results from outside sources such as psychologists or learning centers may be considered as part of the profile data if both the test and the test administrator are approved by the Executive Director of Advanced Academics and align to the types of qualitative and quantitative instruments used to assess Sheldon ISD students.

#### **5. Furloughs**

- A. The district may place on a furlough any student who is unable to maintain satisfactory performance or whose educational needs are not being met within the structure of the gifted and talented program. Gifted/talented students may be furloughed from the program due to personal, health, or academic reasons. Reasons for furloughs could include, but are not limited to:
- Death in the family
  - Educational needs
  - Health issues
  - Failing grades
  - Lack of motivation
  - Excessive absences
- B. A furlough can be initiated by the district, the parent, the guardian, or the student.
- C. A campus committee consisting of an administrator, counselor, and teacher(s) will review the request and other related information. Teachers who serve on the committee must have completed thirty (30) hours of training in gifted education and the annual six-hour update. Administrators and counselors must have completed six (6) hours of professional development in nature/needs and program options.
- D. The campus committee will provide a written response to the parent/guardian and/or student with the decision to grant or decline the furlough.
- E. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be required to sign the Furlough Committee Report.
- F. In accordance with administrative regulations, a furlough shall be granted for specified reasons and for a specified period of time. A student may be furloughed for a period of time not to exceed one year as deemed appropriate by the campus committee. Should the student choose to resume gifted/talented services prior to the date specified in the written furlough request, the parent/guardian should advise the campus counselor in writing. At the end of the furlough, the student may reenter the gifted program, be placed on another furlough, or be exited from the program.

- G. Furlough forms should be included in the student’s cumulative folder. A copy of the Furlough Committee Report should be submitted to the Executive Director of Advanced Academics.

## **6. Exit Criteria**

The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students specifies that decisions to exit students from the gifted/talented program utilize “multiple criteria including student performance in response to services. Social, emotional, academic, or personal reasons can be considered for exiting students. If at any time the selection committee determines it is in the best interest of the student and his or her educational needs, the committee may exit a student from the program. If a student or parent requests removal from the program, the selection committee shall meet with the parent and student before honoring the request. In grades 6-12, a G/T student remains G/T if he/she is enrolled in one advanced course, including a G/T cluster or Pre-AP/AP course. Students who elect to withdraw from all G/T courses should consider exiting the program.

- A. Requests for exit should occur on the district Exit Request form.
- B. A campus committee consisting of an administrator, counselor, and teacher(s) will review the request and other related information. The campus committee must meet the same professional development criteria as those described for furlough decisions.
- C. Exiting of a student is finalized by campus committee decision after consultation with parent(s)/guardian(s) and student regarding the student’s educational needs.
- D. The campus committee will follow the steps below prior to formally exiting a student from the gifted/talented program:
- Ensure that the Exit Request form is completed and signed
  - Document and review student progress in the Gifted/Talented Program
  - Conference with the student, parent(s) and other professional educators, including the Gifted and Talented Specialist
  - Use the Exit Committee Report to notify parent(s)/guardian(s) and student of the committee’s decision