Midlothian ISD Gifted and Talented Program Handbook

Gifted and Talented Program Contacts

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Program Goals and Descriptions

Gifted and Talented Rationale

The Texas Legislature mandated that all school districts identify and serve gifted and talented students in grade levels K-12. In order to assist school districts with this task, the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) adopted a state plan (revised and adopted in 2019) pursuant to Section 29.123 with specific goals for school districts to provide comprehensive services for gifted and talented.

Definition of Gifted and Talented Students

According to Sec. 29.121 of the Texas Education Code, the definition of a "gifted and talented student" means 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) excels in a specific academic field.

State Board of Education Goal for Gifted and Talented Services

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.

Midlothian ISD GT Philosophy and Program Goals

The Midlothian ISD philosophy for gifted education is to provide enriched academic learning experiences for identified gifted and talented students through a program based on the study of language arts, math, science, and social studies, while fostering positive attitudes about giftedness and appreciating the contributions of others. Midlothian ISD is committed to providing gifted learners differentiated curriculum designed to foster higher order thinking skills through innovative products and performance design, creative and analytical processes with technology-based research, and reflective self-evaluation tools. Gifted and talented students experience a high quality of personalized learning through content, processes, products, and high levels of challenge.

To ensure that provisions or gifted and talented students are implemented equitably, Midlothian ISD has established the following program goals:

- Develop and implement an ongoing identification process that meets state plan requirements.
- Ensure that all students have equal opportunity for referral, assessment and selection into the gifted and talented program through the use of norm-referenced qualitative and quantitative measures.
- Provide ongoing professional learning for staff regarding the identification and assessment for gifted and talented students to ensure continued best practices are followed.
- Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for all teachers, counselors and administrators to meet the state plan requirements for annual gifted and talented professional development.
- Develop and implement an effective program and curriculum for gifted and talented students in grades K-12, including secondary options for gifted and talented service design.
- Design a program evaluation process in order to use data based information to inform decisions for future programming.

Identification Procedures and Processes

Referrals

Identification procedures and processes of students for gifted and talented services in Midlothian ISD aligns with the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students. Referrals for the Gifted and Talented Program may be made by parents, educators, students, counselors, or community members. The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students calls for "ongoing identification of students who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment." Students may be referred at any time during the school year, and those referrals shall be sent to the campus counselor. Assessment opportunities for referred students will be offered two times a year: one time in the fall and one time in the spring. Assessment windows for specific grade levels will be posted on the Gifted and Talented webpage and updated annually.

Student Assessment

Written consent by the parent/legal guardian is required prior to assessments conducted for gifted and talented. Consent must be dated to ensure timely consideration during assessment windows. Qualitative and quantitative data shall be used for GT program placement using 3 or more measures. Assessment tools may include, but are not limited to, the following: ability tests, achievement tests, non-verbal assessments, creativity measures, and observation inventories. All kindergarten students are considered for gifted and talented using observation inventories and achievement screening instruments. Midlothian ISD does not accept outside evaluations for gifted and talented.

Selection

A student profile is used to help identify those students who perform, or show potential for performing, at remarkably high levels. The student profile will reflect qualitative and quantitative data from the instruments used for assessment. A balanced review of the data will be conducted before making identification and placement decisions by a selection committee of at least 3 professional educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students. The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students states that, "students whose data reflect that gifted/talented services will be the most effective way to meet their identified educational needs are recommended by the selection committee for gifted and talented services." Final determination of a student's need for gifted and talented services is made by a committee of district educators who have had specific, required GT training. Assessment results and placement decisions will be communicated to parents/legal guardians in writing along with the opportunity to schedule a conference to discuss assessment data.

Transfers

Students identified as gifted and talented in Midlothian ISD and who transfer within the district are automatically placed in the program. Transfer students identified as gifted and talented in another district prior to enrolling in Midlothian ISD may be considered for gifted and talented. MISD will request G/T records, which includes assessment data, from the sending district. Once records are received, the records will be reviewed to determine if qualifying data from the sending district aligns with Midlothian ISD's criteria. If the transfer data is insufficient, Midlothian ISD will assess the student with consent from the parent/legal guardian. Final determination of a student's need for gifted and talented services is made by a committee of district educators who have had specific, required GT training. Assessment results and placement decisions will be communicated to parents/legal guardians in writing along with the opportunity to schedule a conference to discuss assessment data. A decision will be made regarding qualification within 30 school calendar days of the receipt of the student's G/T records from the previous district.

Appeals

A parent, student or educator may appeal any final decision of the selection committee regarding selection for or exit from the gifted and talented program. Appeals shall be made first to the selection committee. A reconsideration request form must be completed and turned in to the campus counselor. These forms may be obtained from the campus counselor. The selection committee will reconvene in order to review the reconsideration request and make a determination if additional assessment or data collection is needed to re-evaluate the decision. The selection committee will communicate the decision to the parent in writing. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with FNG(LOCAL) beginning at Level Two.

Furloughs

The District may 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. A furlough may be initiated by the District, the parent, or the student. In accordance with administrative regulations, a furlough shall be granted for specified reasons and for a specified period of time. At the end of a furlough, the student may reenter the gifted program, be placed on another furlough, or be exited from the program. The purpose of such a furlough is to provide the student an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the selection committee. When considering a request, the following guidelines will be used but other factors may be considered.

- Student scheduling concerns based on school offerings.
- Family/personal reasons.

- Documented signs of frustration, anxiety, etc.
- Documented inability to produce expected work.
- Chronic submission of work beyond the due date.

Once the student and parent are notified that a furlough is requested, a conference will be held with the parent and student. The Selection Committee will document the furlough and provide the parent a copy. If more than two furloughs are needed during a student's school career, the Selection Committee will consider removal from the program.

Exit Provisions

The District shall monitor student performance in the program. 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. Once a student exits the program, he/she must complete the assessment process and meet the criteria before being eligible for the program in the future. The following guidelines will be used when considering a request. These are guidelines only, as other factors may be considered.

- Failure to submit at least 90% of all assigned work in the Gifted and Talented Program (including long-term projects).
- Chronic submission of work beyond the due date.
- Failure to maintain satisfactory coursework in the 4 core content subject areas in differentiated instruction.
- Request by the parent to exit the student from the Gifted and Talented Program.

A student in the Gifted and Talented Program may be exited due to his/her nonperformance in the program itself. A conference will be held with the parent and the student and the Selection Committee will notify the parent in writing of the final determination.

Description of Services

Midlothian ISD understands the importance of personalized learning in order to meet the individual differences in abilities, needs and personal passion of all students. The Gifted and Talented Program provides a differentiated curriculum that develops and challenges the unique capabilities of gifted learners while fostering creativity and productivity. Opportunities for enrichment and acceleration are available in grades K-12.

Service Design

According to the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented students, “identified gifted/talented students are assured an array of learning opportunities that are commensurate with their abilities and that emphasize content in the four (4) foundation curricular areas. Services are available during the school day as well as the entire school year. Parents are informed of these options (19 TAC §89.3(3)).”

Elementary

The Elementary Gifted and Talented program for grades 1-5 is a combination of a pull-out program as well as differentiated curriculum and instruction in the general education classroom in the 4 foundation curricular areas. To ensure that students are afforded the opportunity to work together with other identified gifted and talented students, students are clustered together in homeroom classrooms. Flexible grouping patterns, flexible pacing and acceleration opportunities are provided to meet the individual needs of gifted and talented students.

Gifted and talented students are also served once a week by a district GT Specialist in a pull-out setting for approximately 1 hour to 1 hour and a half depending on the grade level. Gifted and talented curriculum consists of the Texas Performance Standards Project and planned curriculum that covers aptitudes in areas such as, critical thinking, creative thinking, metacognition, affective development, and independent research. It is expected that gifted and talented students present publicly an advanced level product as a direct result of their gifted and talented services.

As part of the program design, identified gifted and talented students also participate in a weekly Challenge Lab time. Challenge labs are an enrichment opportunity run by the district GT specialists with open-ended activities that challenge the students to build, create, or work collaboratively with a small group to accomplish a task. Challenge lab activities foster skills that all students need to be successful 21st century learners such as risk-taking, perseverance, social and emotional intelligence, innovative thinking, and initiative. Students who participate in problem-based learning and creative problem-solving are better equipped to face challenges both inside and outside of the classroom. These comprehensive services provided to gifted and talented students meet both the academic and social and emotional needs of gifted learners.

Kindergarten students identified in March, receive differentiated curriculum and instruction in the general education classroom in the 4 foundation curricular areas. Flexible grouping patterns, flexible pacing and acceleration opportunities are provided to meet the individual needs of gifted and talented students. As part of the program design, identified gifted and talented students also participate in a weekly Challenge Lab time.

Secondary

Gifted and talented students in grades 6-12 have the opportunity to explore rigorous coursework through Honors, Pre-AP, Advanced Placement (AP), and Dual credit courses. In middle school, Honors courses are offered in the 4 foundation curricular areas. Honors courses are designed to be accelerated with challenging curriculum, affording students opportunities to participate in a variety of differentiated learning experiences. In high school, Honors, Pre-AP/AP and Dual Credit courses are offered in a large selection of subject areas so that gifted and talented students can choose courses based on his or her individual interests and needs. Advanced courses offer depth and complexity, including opportunities for acceleration.

Professional Learning

Midlothian ISD is committed to meeting the professional learning requirements of teachers who serve gifted and talented services. Gifted and talented learners have unique educational needs including academic and social and emotional needs. A variety of professional development offerings specifically designed for teachers to provide gifted education are offered throughout the year, including summer.

Foundation Training

All Midlothian ISD teachers who provide gifted and talented instruction and services are required to obtain a minimum of thirty (30) clock hours of professional learning that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, identification and assessment of gifted/talented students, and curriculum and instruction for gifted/talented students. Teachers are required to have completed the thirty (30) hours of professional learning prior to their assignment to the district's gifted/talented services (19 TAC §89.2(1)). Teachers without the required training assigned to provide gifted and talented services, are required to complete the 30 hour training within the first semester.

Annual Training

Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the district's defined gifted/talented services receive a minimum of six (6) hours annually of professional development in gifted/talented education that is related to state teacher gifted/talented education standards (19 TAC §89.2(3) and TAC §233.1). Records of professional development hours are monitored by campus administrators. Annually, each teacher new to the district receives an orientation to the district's gifted/talented identification processes and the district's services for gifted/talented students.

Requirements for Supervisors of GT Services

Teachers as well as administrators who have supervisory duties for service decisions are required to complete a minimum of six (6) hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students and service options for gifted/talented students (19 TAC §89.2(4)). Counselors who work with gifted/talented students are required to complete a minimum of six (6) hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, service options for gifted/talented students, and social emotional learning (19 TAC §89.2(4)). Records of professional development hours are monitored and housed at the district level.

Evaluation of Professional Development

Evaluation of professional learning activities for gifted/talented education is ongoing and related to state teacher gifted/talented education standards, and the results of the evaluation are used in making decisions regarding future staff development plans (19 TAC §89.5 and TAC §233.1). Gifted/talented specialists are involved in planning, reviewing, and/or conducting the district's gifted/talented professional learning.

Family/Community Involvement

Gifted and Talented Orientation

Each year, students identified as gifted and talented will receive information in a parent packet informing them of gifted and talented service options. Periodically, parents will be informed of student progress as part of the student's gifted and talented services. Parents and community members can see approved board policies on gifted and talented student identification online in EHBB Local.

Learning Opportunities for Gifted and Talented Students

An array of learning opportunities are available to gifted and talented students during the school day. Gifted and talented students may want to participate in extended learning outside of the school day or in the summer. Listed below are a variety of optional programs for students. This list is not exclusive.

- Vanderbilt Program for Talented Youth https://pty.vanderbilt.edu/
- Texas Performance Standards Project https://www.texaspsp.org/
- Camp Invention https://www.invent.org/camp
- theCoderSchool https://www.thecoderschool.com/locations/flowermound/
- Summer Institute for the Gifted https://www.giftedstudy.org/
- Snapology of Grapevine-Keller grapevine.snapology.com
- Lone Star Leadership Academy: Education in Action www.educationinaction.org
- Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development's University for Young People www.baylor.edu/soe/uyp
- Aquatic Science Adventure Camp https://www.eardc.txstate.edu/camp.html

Gifted and Talented Showcase

Each year, elementary students identified as gifted and talented participate in the Texas Performance Standards Project. All MISD elementary GT students 1-5 showcase their advanced research projects to community members at one location. Students display their projects and have the opportunity to share their research outcomes with parents, community members, and educators.

Annual Program Evaluation

The effectiveness of the gifted and talented program and services is evaluated annually. Surveys will be sent to parents, students and community members for input on service design, identification and assessment, and gifted and talented curriculum. Results will be shared with board members, administrators, teachers, and parents. Data will be used to modify and update district and campus improvement plans.

Resources for Parents

- National Association For Gifted Children http://www.nagc.org/#parents_home
- Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented (TAGT) http://www.txgifted.org/
- Texas Education Agency (TEA) http://www.tea.state.tx.us
- Texas Performance Standards http://www.texaspsp.org/
- David Institute http://www.davidsongifted.org/

Glossary of Terms

Ability Tests

An ability test is an assessment instrument designed to assess a student's ability to learn, reason and problem-solve relative to nationally normed data. There are many types of ability tests. In Midlothian ISD, students are assessed in verbal, non-verbal and quantitative ability.

Achievement Tests

An achievement test is an assessment instrument designed to assess a student's current academic achievement level relative to nationally normed data. This is a measure of what they have already learned in specific content areas. In Midlothian ISD, students are assessed in Reading and Math.

Observation Inventories

Observation inventories can be used to identify specific behaviors exhibited consistently by a student. Midlothian ISD uses a research based comprehensive observational instrument available for identifying gifted students ages 5–18. This standardized, norm-referenced instrument is completed by teachers and provides a qualitative method for identifying gifted children.

Percentile Rank

This score describes the relative comparison of your student's performance to other students in the nation who are in the same grade and were tested at the same time of year. For example, a percentile ranking of 75 would mean that your student scored higher on the assessment than 75% of students in the national comparison group. 'Percentile rank' is not the same as 'percentage correct.' A percentile is a comparison of one particular student's performance to a sampling of other students. The National Percentile score ranks raw scores from highest to lowest and shows where an individual's raw score falls in comparison. The lowest score that is reported is 1; the highest is 99. Here is an example of how the scale breaks down:

1- 4: lowest
5-10: low
11-22: well below average
23-40: slightly below average
41-59: average

60-77: slightly above average
78-89: well above average
90-95: high
96-99: highest

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data describes qualities or characteristics. It is collected using questionnaires, interviews, or observation, and frequently appears in narrative form. The data may be in the form of descriptive words that can be examined for patterns or meaning, sometimes through the use of coding. Coding allows the researcher to categorize qualitative data to identify themes that correspond with the research questions and to perform quantitative analysis.

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data is the value of data in the form of counts or numbers where each data-set has a unique numerical value associated with it. This data is any quantifiable information that can be used for mathematical calculations and statistical analysis. This data can be verified and can also be conveniently evaluated using mathematical techniques.

Texas Performance Standards Project

The Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) comprises a set of performance standards, curricula, and assessments for differentiating instruction and deepening academic learning. TPSP enhances gifted/talented (G/T) programs from kindergarten through high school.