

Gifted and Talented Handbook

2026-2027



SHERMAN
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

District Gifted Mission Statement

Sherman ISD provides GT students with differentiated opportunities that inspire, challenge, and empower them to reach their full potential as leaders and lifelong learners.

Lead Measures:

- Increase student opportunities to develop and demonstrate their strengths, talents, and leadership skills through differentiated learning experiences.
- Provide GT families with meaningful resources, information, and opportunities to support students in discovering and developing their unique talents and leadership abilities.
- Provide teachers with ongoing support, professional learning, and resources to deliver research-based instruction and differentiated opportunities that challenge GT students to reach their full potential.

State Goal for Services for Gifted Students

Students who participate in services designed for gifted/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/talented students will have produced products and performances of professional quality as part of their program services.

[Texas State Plan for Gifted and Talented - English and Spanish](#)

State Definition of Giftedness

“Gifted and talented students” 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.

Sherman ISD Program Design

The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted & Talented Students requires that gifted students have opportunities to work independently, with other classmates, and with other gifted students during the school day and through the entire school year.

Sherman ISD will assure an array of learning opportunities that are appropriate to the abilities of gifted and talented students that emphasize content in the four core academic areas (English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies).

Grades K-5 are served through a GT pull-out program called Challenge, delivered by GT trained specialists as well as through differentiated activities when appropriate in the regular classroom. GT students are pulled out for the Challenge Program 1 to 3 hours weekly depending on grade level and class size. GT students will produce a research based product to present at an end of year showcase hosted by Sherman ISD. Students receive differentiated instruction during Challenge class and are not required to complete the work they miss in their regular class when they are at Challenge. Students are required to know and understand the concepts that they miss in the regular class when they are at Challenge. It is recommended that, when possible, new concepts not be introduced when the GT students are at Challenge and that time instead be used as a review time for the other students in class.

Grades 6-8 are served through Advanced Academics/GT (AA/GT) classes in the four core academic areas. A student may participate in all four AA/GT classes but it is not required. A AA/GT student must participate in at least one AA/GT class or he/she will be placed on furlough. Starting in the 2026-27 school year, GT students will be pulled during advisory time with a GT trained teacher to work on project based learning and STEM related activities. They will produce a research based product to present at an end of year showcase hosted by Sherman ISD.

Grades 9-12 are served through academic course options at the high school. AA/GT students can take AA/GT designated Pre-AP and AP English courses all four years. The courses do not always have enough GT students to create a class, but are offered annually and scheduled if numbers permit. GT students also have the opportunity to take advanced courses (AP and Advanced CTE, Dual Credit) in all areas including core academics, fine arts, and career and technical education. Starting in the 2026-27 school year, GT students will be pulled during advisory time with a GT trained teacher to work on project based learning and STEM related

activities. They will produce a research based product to present at an end of year showcase hosted by Sherman ISD.

Tiers of Service

Gifted students are gifted all day, every day. Even when a gifted student is in a regular classroom situation they deserve an intellectual challenge and a learning environment that meets their social and emotional needs. Sherman ISD offers an array of services beginning with differentiation in the regular classroom and extending to pull-out services. Elementary Challenge students are clustered in groups of four or more in the regular classroom and GT students at the secondary level are clustered together in GT/AA classes. In addition to differentiation in the regular classroom and pull-out services, SISD also offers math Uppervention at the elementary level designed for students who demonstrate advanced mathematical ability. This continues into middle school with GT content classes in grades 6-8, or Advanced Academic classes in grades 9-12. We refer to this as tiers of service and it all begins with Tier 1, universal instruction.

Teachers responsible for gifted students as part of the gifted service design must have a minimum of the state-required 30-hour training for gifted education and receive an annual 6-hour update. With this training, Tier 1 teachers are able to differentiate for students in the regular classroom when appropriate.

Tiers of Service (continued)

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Differentiation within the regular classroom	Elementary - Pullout (Challenge/GT Program and Uppervention Math designed for students who demonstrate advanced mathematical ability) Middle School - AA/GT Classes for ELAR, math, science and social studies, pull out during advisory High School - Pre-AP and	Acceleration by grade or single subject Individual Academic Competitions

AP classes, dual enrollment
college classes, advanced
fine arts classes, advanced
career and technology
classes, pull
out during advisory

Team competitions (UIL, Robotics)

Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted Learners

Gifted students have unique social and emotional needs. All GT teachers and counselors have received training to support both the cognitive and affective needs. Students are encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities that bring them personal satisfaction. Parents are encouraged to provide a balance of “out of school” activities that are appropriate to the social and emotional needs of their children.

Research-Based Gifted and Talented Identification Process Framework

Purpose

The purpose of this identification process is to ensure equitable, research-based identification of students for Gifted and Talented (GT) services. The process is designed to recognize students with exceptional potential and performance across diverse populations, including students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, twice-exceptional students, economically disadvantaged students, and underrepresented populations.

This framework uses multiple measures over time rather than a single test score. Identification decisions are based on patterns of evidence demonstrating advanced aptitude, exceptional achievement, rapid learning, problem-solving ability, and/or advanced academic potential.

Guiding Principles

Multiple Criteria

No single data point determines GT identification. Decisions are based on a body of evidence.

Equity and Access

The process is intentionally designed to reduce barriers and identify students from all backgrounds.

Universal Screening

All students are universally screened in Kindergarten and 2nd grade to ensure equitable identification practices and to minimize the possibility of students being overlooked due to a lack of being referred.

Strength-Based Identification

The process focuses on student strengths, potential, and advanced learning behaviors.

Research-Based Practices

Identification procedures align with recommendations from:

- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)
- The Association for the Gifted (TAG)
- Texas Association of Gifted and Talented (TAGT)
- Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students
- Best practices in equitable gifted identification research

Referral Sources

Students may enter the identification process through:

- Universal screening

- Teacher referral
 - Parent referral
 - Student self-referral
 - Counselor referral
 - Administrator referral
 - Community member referral
 - Data review team recommendation
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Data Collection Framework

A comprehensive student profile is developed using both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Category 1: Ability Measures

Ability data provides information about a student's reasoning, problem-solving, and learning potential.

Possible Measures

- Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
- Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT3)
- Naglieri General Ability Test (NGAT)
- District-approved aptitude assessments

Best Practice Recommendations

- Use local norms in addition to national norms when possible.
 - Include nonverbal assessments to reduce language barriers.
 - Consider patterns of strengths.
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Category 2: Achievement Measures

Achievement data provides evidence of advanced academic performance and mastery.

Possible Measures

- iReady - At Elementary Levels
- State assessment performance
- Curriculum-based assessments
- Benchmark assessments
- Classroom performance

Suggested Evidence Indicators

Students may demonstrate:

- Consistently high achievement
- Performance significantly above grade level
- Rapid mastery of new content
- Minimal repetition needed for learning
- Strong transfer of learning across contexts

Best Practice Considerations

- Avoid requiring perfection or straight A grades.
 - Consider growth trends over time.
 - Recognize that gifted students may underachieve.
 - Evaluate opportunity to learn and access to enrichment.
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Category 3: Teacher Anecdotal Records and Observation Data

Teacher observations provide critical information about student behaviors that standardized measures may not capture.

Suggested Observation Areas

Teachers may document evidence of or provide artifacts to show:

Advanced Cognitive Behaviors

- Learns quickly with minimal repetition
- Makes sophisticated connections
- Generates advanced questions
- Uses advanced vocabulary and communication

- Demonstrates intellectual curiosity

Creativity and Problem Solving

- Produces original ideas
- Thinks flexibly
- Approaches tasks in unique ways
- Demonstrates innovative thinking
- Shows persistence with complex tasks

Leadership and Motivation

- Influences peers positively
- Demonstrates initiative
- Pursues independent learning
- Exhibits intense interests
- Shows advanced task commitment

Recommended Artifacts

- Anecdotal records
- Behavioral checklists
- Rating scales
- Structured classroom observations
- Learning behavior rubrics

Best Practice Recommendation

Teacher training should occur annually to reduce bias and improve recognition of gifted characteristics across diverse student populations.

Category 4: Student Artifact Submissions

Artifacts allow students to demonstrate advanced thinking and creativity beyond traditional testing.

Possible Submissions

Students may submit:

- Writing samples
- Advanced projects
- Creative products
- STEM designs or investigations
- Artwork with analytical explanation
- Independent research
- Multimedia presentations
- Problem-solving tasks

Student Submission Evaluation Criteria

Reviewers may evaluate:

- Complexity of thinking
- Originality
- Depth of understanding
- Creativity
- Sophistication of communication
- Evidence of advanced reasoning

Best Practice Recommendation

Use common rubrics and multiple evaluators to improve reliability.

Category 5: Language Acquisition and Linguistic Indicators

Language acquisition data can provide valuable evidence of advanced learning potential, especially for multilingual learners.

Possible Indicators

Students may demonstrate:

- Rapid acquisition of a second language
- Advanced vocabulary development
- Sophisticated oral language skills
- Quick transfer between languages
- Advanced comprehension abilities
- Strong verbal reasoning

- Code-switching flexibility

Possible Data Sources

- TELPAS or language proficiency assessments
- ESL teacher observations
- Oral language samples
- Reading language growth data
- Comparative growth patterns

Best Practice Recommendation

Evaluate students in their strongest language whenever possible.

Category 6: Additional Supporting Evidence

Additional evidence may strengthen the student profile.

Possible Examples

- Leadership indicators
 - Extracurricular accomplishments
 - Community involvement
 - Competition results
 - Attendance patterns
 - Social-emotional characteristics associated with giftedness
 - Response to enrichment opportunities
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Identification Holistic Matrix Example

Data Category	Example Sources	Weight/Consideration
Ability Data	CogAT, NNAT, NGAT	Major indicator
Achievement Data	iReady, STAAR, classroom performance	Major indicator

Teacher Observations	Anecdotal records, checklists	Supporting indicator
Artifact	Projects, writing, creative products	Supporting indicator
Language Acquisition	TELPAS, oral language growth	Supporting indicator
Additional Evidence	Creativity, leadership, enrichment response	Supporting indicator

Districts may determine local weighting systems; however, no single criterion should automatically exclude a student from consideration.

Identification Committee Structure

GT Identification Committee Members

The GT identification committee will include at least 3 trained GT Specialists and may include, if necessary the following:

- Classroom teacher
- Campus administrator
- Counselor
- ESL specialist
- Special education representative

Committee Responsibilities

The committee will:

- Review all available student data
- Consider patterns of advanced performance and potential
- Evaluate contextual factors
- Ensure equitable decision-making
- Maintain confidentiality
- Document rationale for decisions

Best Practice Recommendation

Committee members should complete annual training on:

- Characteristics of gifted learners
 - Equity and implicit bias
 - Identification of underrepresented populations
 - Twice-exceptionality
 - Cultural responsiveness
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Decision-Making Guidelines

Evidence-Based Decision Making

Students should demonstrate a consistent pattern of advanced performance and/or potential across multiple measures.

The committee should consider:

- Strengths across data sources
- Consistency of advanced indicators
- Growth trends
- Contextual and environmental factors
- Access to opportunities
- Evidence of untapped potential

Flexible Identification

Students do not need to excel in every category to qualify for services.

Examples:

- A multilingual learner with strong nonverbal reasoning may qualify despite developing English proficiency.
 - A twice-exceptional student may demonstrate advanced potential despite disability-related challenges.
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Parent Communication Procedures

Parents/guardians should have access to:

- Information about GT services
- Referral procedures and timelines
- Description of assessment measures
- Consent forms when required
- Identification results
- Appeals procedures

Communication should be available in families' home languages whenever possible.

Appeals Process

Families may appeal identification decisions within 10 school days of receiving their child's placement notification. This should be made through the Project Education portal and in accordance with with [FNG \(Local\)](#).

Appeals May Include

- Submission of additional evidence
 - Review of procedural concerns
 - Additional assessment data
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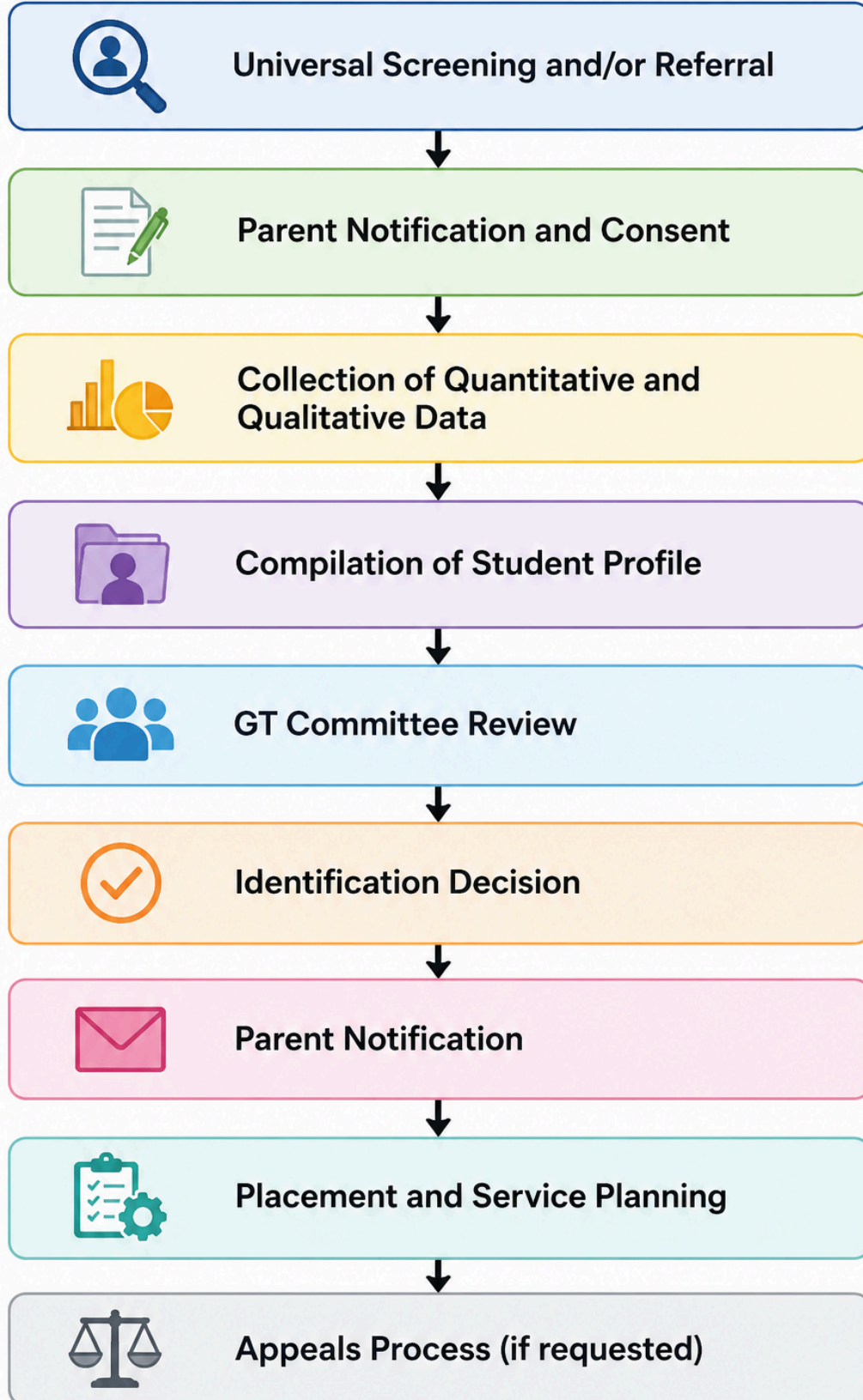
Identification Process Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Districts should routinely evaluate:

- Representation across demographic groups
- Reliability of identification procedures
- Student success within GT services
- Referral trends

- Staff training effectiveness
- Family feedback

Sample Identification Flowchart



Sherman ISD GT Referral and Identification Timeline:

ID Based on Referrals (1st-12th):	
September 14-18	Educator Referral Window
September 19 - October 3	Parent Referral Window
September 19 - October 3	Parent Notification and Permissions
October 5 - 9	GT Testing (No Challenge Classes)
October 19 -23	ID Committee Meetings (No Challenge Classes)
October 26	Newly identified GT students begin Challenge classes
ID Based on Universal Screen (NGAT) (K & 2):	
November 9 - December 4	Kindergarten and 2nd Grade Screener Window
December 7 - 18	Parent Notification and Permissions
December 7 - 18	K Teacher/Parent Referral Window
January 5 - 15	GT Testing K (Screener and Referrals) & 2 (2nd grade screener only) (No Challenge Classes Jan. 5-8)
January 19 - 22	ID Committee Meetings (No Challenge Classes)
January 25	Newly identified GT students begin Challenge classes

Transfer Students

When a student identified as gifted by a previous school district transfers into SISD, the student's records shall be reviewed by the Gifted Identification Committee (GIC) to determine the appropriate placement of the student. The committee shall make its determination within 30 days of the receipt of GT records from the previous district and

shall base its decision on the transferred records, observation reports of District teachers who instruct the student, and student and parent conferences.

Reassessment for Gifted Services

Students who have been placed in the Challenge/GT Program will not be re-screened from year to year for GT identification. Identified students will continue in the program as long as they demonstrate a need for services.

Gifted programming shifts from a pull-out model in grades K-5 to a subject-specific program in grades 6-12. To ensure proper placement in appropriately challenging coursework, student progress and performance will be periodically assessed. Qualifying students will be encouraged to participate in Math and Science AA/GT classes, English Language Arts and Social Studies AA/GT Classes, or potentially all four AA/GT content classes.

Probation/Furlough/Exit Procedures

Probation

A teacher may recommend probation for a GT student who is not *consistently* performing at the advanced standard required for the gifted program/class (i.e. report card grade below 70 in core classes). Notification will be provided to the parent so that they can collaborate with the teacher and participate as a partner in education to support the student.

The teacher will complete the Gifted Probation Recommendation Form in the Project Education system to be reviewed by the Gifted Identification Committee (GIC). The form will include at least two specific differentiation strategies attempted with the student prior to the probationary referral. During the probationary period, teachers will attempt a minimum of two additional differentiation and/or intervention strategies and execute a process to monitor the progress of the student during the probationary period (usually

3-9 weeks). The GIC will review the student's progress and will make one of three recommendations:

1. Remove the student from probation and return him/her to good standing in the gifted program and/or class.
2. Continue with the probationary period for an additional nine weeks with additional intervention and progress monitoring.
3. Recommend that the student be furloughed from the gifted program/class for the remainder of the school year.

A student recommended for furlough will have the opportunity to participate in the gifted program/class the following school year. If a student is recommended for probation for a second year, the GIC may recommend exiting from the gifted program/class.

Furlough

A student may be placed on furlough (leave of absence) from the gifted program for up to one year. A furlough may be initiated by a parent, the Gifted Identification Committee (GIC), or the student, with parent permission for any of the following reasons:

1. The student has been on probation and the GIC recommends furlough.
2. Furlough would be in the best interest of the student because of extenuating circumstances such as health concerns, family issues, or extreme time commitments outside of school hours.
3. The student is not participating in any gifted programming (pull-out, GT course, advanced course) during that school year.

A parent or student may request a furlough from the school counselor or the GT teacher.

Exit

A student may be exited from the program by the GIC if Probation/Furlough requirements have not been met. The parent may also request that the student be exited from the program. Once exited, a student must go through the referral, assessment and identification process to re-enter the gifted program.

Professional Development

Sherman ISD is committed to providing appropriate and meaningful professional learning which allows the staff to meet the unique social, emotional, and cognitive needs of gifted and talented students. All teachers* in grades K-12 are required to complete the 30-hour GT Foundation Training and participate in at least six hours of annual professional development to support gifted learners. Administrators and counselors are required to complete a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes the nature and needs of gifted/talented students and service options for gifted/talented students (19 TAC §89.5 and TAC §233.1).

It is the practice of Sherman ISD Challenge/GT Program specialists that they receive 18 hours of professional development annually that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students.

Resources and information on these training can be found on the internal GT Resource Site.

*Teachers exempt from GT training requirements include: FOCUS, Dyslexia, and Speech teachers

Grades K-8

Grades 9-12

30-hour initial training

30-hour initial training OR

6-hour annual updates

12 hours in Nature/Needs of GT

18 hours Pre-AP or AP Institute/NMSI

Program Evaluation

Sherman ISD will evaluate the gifted program annually. Evaluation data will be included in the district and campus improvement plans. A program review will be presented annually to the Board of Trustees.

Contact Information:

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