HISD
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



Gifted/Talented Services 2026-2027 Family Handbook

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This guide is regularly updated to reflect legislative and board decisions and stakeholder feedback. Therefore, we include the date on which the guide was last edited or updated. (September 2026)

HISD Gifted/Talented Program

Welcome

We aim to foster a culture of parent involvement and empowerment, especially among parents of students identified as Gifted and Talented. It is our duty to create an environment where you, as parents, feel confident and navigate Gifted and Talented resources and processes, ensuring appropriate service delivery for your child.



Core Beliefs

The Houston ISD Gifted and Talented department supports the following beliefs:

- Gifted students thrive in environments that offer depth, complexity, and real-world relevance through differentiated and accelerated instruction.
- All students, regardless of background, deserve equitable access to gifted services and opportunities that recognize and nurture their potential.
- Educators, families, and communities must work together to advocate for and support gifted learners throughout their educational journey.
- Creativity, innovation, and initiative are essential to learning and should be actively encouraged and recognized.

Board Policy

The Houston ISD Board Policies for Gifted and Talented services are available here:

EHBB – Legal, Local– District processes for the Gifted/Talented Program

Texas Definition of Gifted/Talented

A "Gifted and 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:

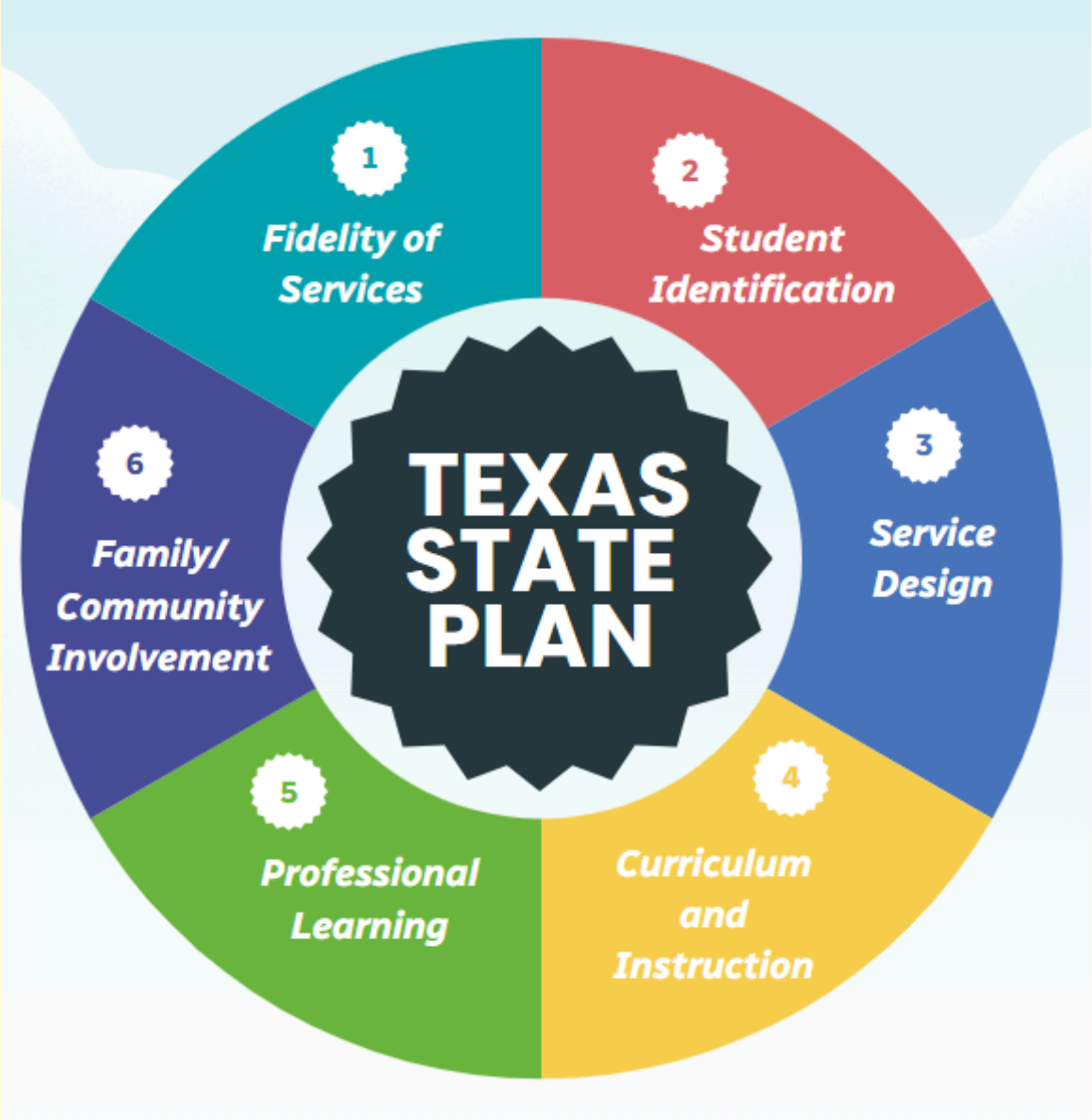
- Exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- Possesses an unusual capacity for leadership;
- Excels in a specific academic field.

(Texas Education Code §29.121)

STATE GOAL FOR SERVICES FOR GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS

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/talented students will have produced products and performances of professional quality as part of their program services. (Texas Education Agency, 2024, p.v).

Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students



The State of Texas requires districts to meet six performance standards for G/T service design: fidelity of services, student identification, service design, curriculum and instruction, professional learning, and family/community involvement.

Student Identification

Gifted/talented identification procedures and progress monitoring allow students to demonstrate and develop their diverse talents and abilities. (State Plan, TEA, 2024)

G/T testing is available to all enrolled Houston ISD students from Pre-K4 through 12th grade if they are referred for evaluation by a teacher, parent, the student, or a district-generated roster. Requests will also be accepted for 4-year-old students planning to enroll in Kindergarten at HISD for the 2027-2028 school year who currently live in a residence zoned to an HISD campus. A parent/Guardian must provide consent for Gifted/Talented evaluations when someone other than them makes the referral.

Information about the G/T testing window is regularly shared on campus and district websites, in newsletters, and through various communications from the district and schools. Parents must request testing through the district's "Request to Test" link provided in those communications.

All assessments are administered during pre-established testing schedules and timelines by trained Houston ISD staff at the student's enrolled or zoned Houston ISD campus. The G/T testing administered includes the following:

- Pre-K4/Entering Kindergarten
- Universal 2nd Grade
- HISD 5th and 8th grade students who score above the 80th percentile on MAP testing in Math or Reading
- Kindergarten - Twelfth Grade

Pre-K4/Entering Kindergarten Testing



Students must be five years old on or before September 1st of the eligible enrollment school year to be qualified for Entering Kindergarten Gifted/Talented testing.

- Entering Kindergarten testing will be done at the student's enrolled or zoned Houston ISD campus.
- If applying for Vanguard Magnet Schools, parents must apply through the Office of School Choice.

Universal Second Grade Testing



- All enrolled HISD second grade students not currently identified as G/T-identified.
- No request is required for Houston ISD enrolled second-grade students unless the student is not G/T-identified in both math and reading and is seeking identification in the missed area.
- If applying to Vanguard Magnet Schools, students must be G/T-identified in both math and reading, and parents must apply through the Office of School Choice.

Kindergarten - Twelfth Grade Testing



- Enrolled Houston ISD K—12 students not currently identified as G/T whom are referred for G/T evaluation by a teacher, parent, or the student themselves are assessed.
- All enrolled HISD 5th and 8th grade students who scored above the 80th percentile on MAP testing in math or reading are assessed.
- If applying for Vanguard Magnet Schools, parents must apply through the Office of School Choice.



Gifted Services Qualification Process

The Gifted/Talented K-12 identification process relies on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, utilizing multiple sources, which may include:

- Abilities Test
- Other Data Measurements

All scores are converted into points according to Houston ISD's G/T Identification Matrix. HISD uses two separate G/T matrices: one for students applying for Entering Kindergarten and another for students currently in grades K-12.

Parents will receive written notification in December regarding the District's G/T evaluation decision.

If a student is evaluated and does not qualify, they will be eligible for reassessment in the next calendar school year.



Qualification Categories

Students identified as Gifted/Talented can be qualified in 3 different categories:

Qualification Categories:		
Both Content Areas (ALL)	1 Content Area (Reading ONLY)	1 Content Area (Math ONLY)
♦Reading/ELA & Math	Reading/ELA	Math
*Receives services in Math, Science, Reading/ELA, and Social Studies	*Receives services in Reading/ELA and Social Studies	*Receives services in Math and Science

♦To apply to any Vanguard magnet program, a student must qualify in both Math and Reading.

Appeals

An appeal allows parents or guardians to request that the Gifted/Talented Placement Committee review additional information regarding a student's qualifications for Gifted/Talented services. To begin a Level I appeal, a G/T Eligibility Appeal Request Form must be submitted to the campus G/T Coordinator within 15 district days of receiving the G/T eligibility notification letter. If a parent or guardian disagrees with the Level I decision, a Level II appeal must be submitted to the G/T Department within 15 district days of that decision. **Level II decisions are final.**

**Please note that the district does not accept test results from assessments administered by clinicians outside the school system.*

Service Design

A flexible system of viable service options provides a research-based learning continuum that is developed and consistently implemented throughout the district to meet the needs and reinforce the strengths and interests of gifted/talented students. (State Plan, TEA, 2024)

What services does HISD offer for Gifted/Talented students?

All campuses in the Houston ISD offer Gifted/Talented (G/T) services for students in grades K-12, except some unique campuses, such as early childhood learning centers, may not offer G/T programs. These services aim to address the specific needs of Gifted/Talented (G/T) students at their designated schools. The curriculum is differentiated by adjusting the depth, complexity, and pace of lessons, with a focus on higher-level thinking and independent research skills.

G/T students work with G/T-trained teachers and have opportunities to collaborate with peers, interact with other students, and work independently. They receive personalized instruction in four core subjects, based on the areas in which they qualify.



HISD Elementary & Secondary Service Designs

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) allows districts to implement five service models for Gifted/Talented students, and campuses within our district can select the model that best fits their population. HISD offers various service models to meet the needs of gifted students. The most common service models for gifted students in HISD include:

- Cluster Grouping: Gifted students are grouped together in a regular education classroom with a teacher who has completed G/T training. In this setting, differentiated instruction, including extensions and enrichment opportunities, is provided to help students reach their full academic potential.
- Pull-Out/G/T Hour: Identified gifted students are pulled out of their regular classes to collaborate with peers who share similar interests and abilities. During this time, they engage in research, problem-solving, communication, and critical and creative thinking activities, guided by a G/T-trained teacher.
- G/T Only Classroom: Gifted students learn alongside other G/T identified students in a dedicated classroom. Here, they receive differentiated instruction, including opportunities for extensions and enrichment, aimed at helping them achieve their academic potential by a G/T trained teacher.

Additional services in secondary campuses can also be provided through a combination of Pre-AP/AP, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Advanced/Accelerated Academic courses. These learning opportunities focus on the four core academic areas and are designed to meet the needs of gifted learners.

It is important to note that participation in these advanced subjects may vary based on individual identification as gifted. Students can be enrolled in advanced courses in two, three, or all four core areas. However, if a student chooses to "opt out" of advanced courses, they will lose their Gifted/Talented (G/T) status, and their coding will be updated accordingly.

Curriculum & Instruction

Districts meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school. . (State Plan, TEA, 2024)



According to the Texas State Plan for Gifted Education, identified Gifted/Talented students from kindergarten through grade twelve are provided with a variety of learning opportunities that cater to their abilities. These opportunities emphasize content in four foundational curricular areas.

The Houston ISD prioritizes instruction in all four core subjects—English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies—for gifted students. The district's curriculum incorporates elements of depth and complexity throughout instructional materials and teacher resources to facilitate differentiation. Services for Gifted/Talented students are available during the school day and throughout the entire school year. All core content teachers are required to complete 30 foundational hours of training in Gifted/Talented education, along with an annual six-hour update.

Additionally, Gifted/Talented students are expected to complete an advanced research capstone product each school year. They are also required to participate in an annual campus and/or district Gifted/Talented expo, where they will showcase the research they completed during the year.

What is a Vanguard Magnet Program?

Vanguard Magnet programs provide G/T services to zoned students and those who transfer via School Choice, offering a differentiated curriculum and advanced enrichment opportunities. For more information on Vanguard programming, please visit the Office of School Choice website.

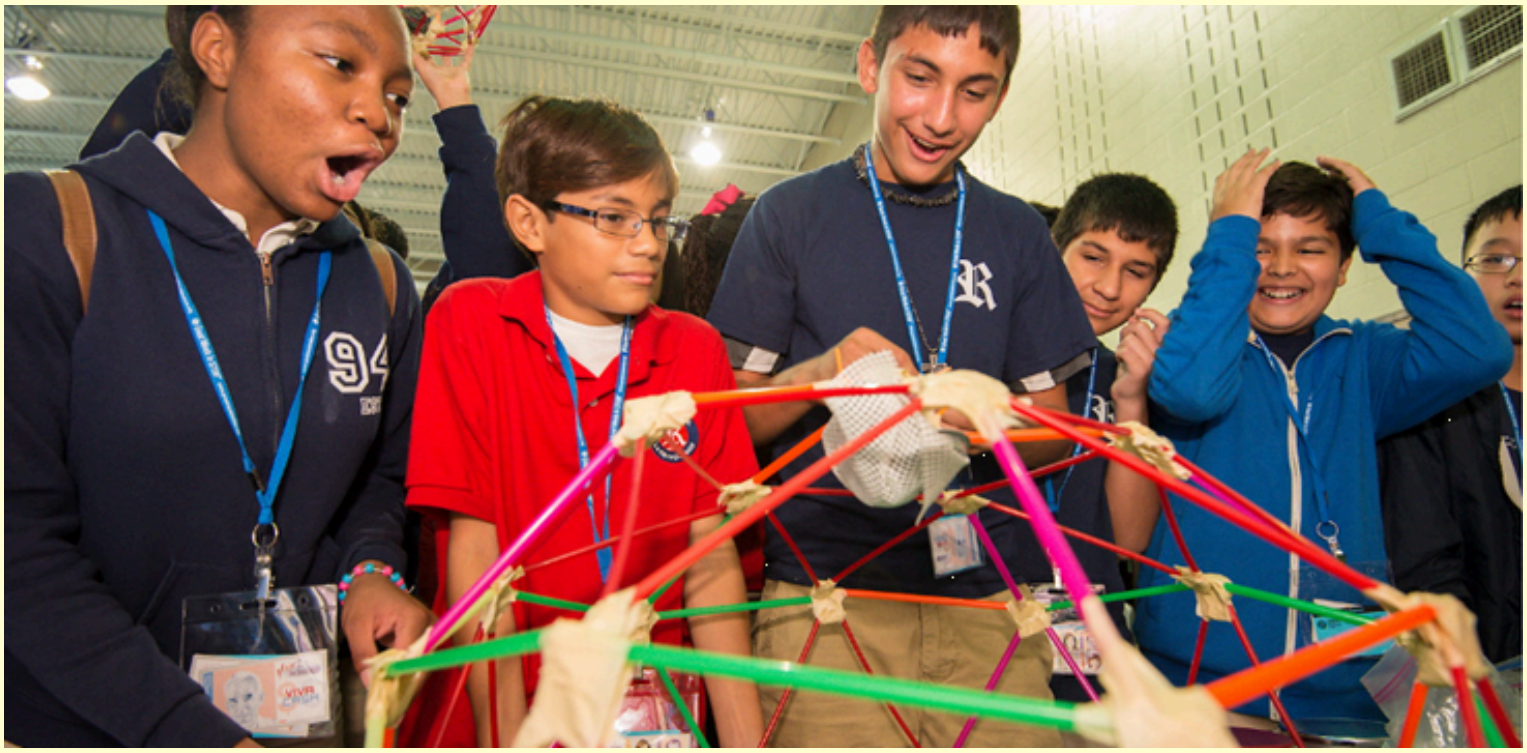
Vanguard Magnet Campuses

Elementary Schools
- Askew ES
- Carrillo ES
- DeZavala ES
- Herod ES
- Oak Forest ES
- River Oaks ES
- Roosevelt ES
- Travis ES
- TH Rogers
- Windsor Village

Middle Schools
- Black MS
- Burbank MS
- Hamilton MS
- Lanier MS
- TH Rogers

High School
- Carnegie HS

**To apply to any Vanguard magnet program, a student must qualify in both Math and Reading.*



Transfer of Students

Students who participated in gifted programs before joining Houston ISD may qualify for the Gifted/Talented Program. Families should submit records to the campus G/T coordinator, who will then forward the documents to the district office.

The previous district's screening records will be reviewed for alignment with Houston ISD's criteria and the Texas State Plan. If the data is insufficient, the student can retest during Houston ISD's next identification window. The district will make a qualification decision within 30 school days of receiving the assessment results.

Furlough Procedure

Furloughs are evaluated on an individual basis and may be granted for various reasons, including, but not limited to, custody issues, divorce, sabbatical leave for parents or guardians, foreign exchange programs, and medical concerns. However, struggling with the workload is not a valid reason for a furlough, as campuses have intervention resources available to support students.

Exit of G/T Servicing

Student performance in the gifted/talented program will be monitored regularly. The Gifted/Talented placement committee may remove a student from the program at any time if it determines it is in the student's best interest. If a parent requests that their child be removed from the program, the committee will meet to discuss the request. Once a student has exited the program, they must follow the identification procedures to be readmitted.

Family & Community Involvement

The district involves family and community members in services designed for gifted/talented students throughout the school year. (State Plan, TEA, 2024)



Houston ISD believes that meaningful community engagement is essential in all major decision-making processes. The Gifted/Talented Department is committed to developing systems that foster, maintain, and sustain a positive culture and climate and build effective relationships among all stakeholders to promote ongoing improvement of Gifted/Talented services.

G/T Parent Advisory Committee

The Houston ISD Gifted & Talented Education Supporters (G.A.T.E.S.). The Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Houston ISD Gifted and Talented Department. It provides stakeholder input, recommendations, and support on gifted and talented identification, programming, services, family engagement, and continuous program improvement.



Gifted/Talented Resources

Texas Association for the Gifted/Talented
https://www.txgifted.org/

Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP)
https://www.texaspsp.org/

Texas Education Agency
https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/gifted-and-talented-education

National Association for Gifted Children
http://www.nagc.org

Gifted Guru - Resources for Parents
https://giftedguru.com/resources-for-parents/

Contact Us

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Gifted & Talented
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Academics Department


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