Gifted & Talented

Districtwide Family Newsletter

2026-2027 School Year - Volume 1, Issue 3

From the Houston ISD G/T Department

Welcome to another edition of the G/T Districtwide Family Newsletter! This month, we're inviting families to take a closer look at the practices, planning, and supports that shape the gifted learning experience across Houston ISD, both inside and beyond the classroom. Together, we'll explore how families can support the unique social-emotional needs of gifted learners, how campuses intentionally plan for gifted services, and how teachers deepen and differentiate instruction.

We'll begin with our October SEL Spotlight on Emotional Regulation in Gifted Learners, exploring the importance of helping gifted students recognize, understand, and manage their emotions while sharing practical strategies families can use from home.

We'll also explore the Depth and Complexity instructional framework, a set of thinking tools used to help gifted learners engage with content at deeper and more complex levels. This month, we'll spotlight the **Details** icon and share how it encourages students to look beyond the surface by examining the important facts, features, and attributes that lead to deeper understanding. From there, we'll take families behind the scenes of gifted education by introducing Campus Gifted Education Plans (C-GEPs) and explaining how campuses use these plans to guide the services and learning opportunities provided to their G/T students.

We hope this edition provides families with a clearer picture of how social-emotional support, intentional campus planning, and differentiated instruction work together to create meaningful and challenging learning experiences for gifted students across Houston ISD.

October SEL Spotlight: Emotional Regulation in Gifted Learners

Giftedness influences more than how students learn; it can also shape how they experience and respond to the world around them.

Developing strong emotional regulation skills can support gifted students in managing perfectionism, responding to academic challenges, developing positive peer relationships, and embracing growth through productive struggle.

Did You Know?

Some gifted learners may experience emotions with great intensity, become frustrated when their performance does not match their expectations, struggle when faced with unexpected changes, or have difficulty moving forward after making a mistake. Developing emotional regulation helps students learn to recognize their emotions and choose healthy strategies for responding to them.

Emotional regulation does not mean eliminating strong emotions. Instead, it is about helping students develop the awareness and tools needed to understand their emotions, manage their responses, and move forward successfully.

How Families Can Help

Families play an important role in helping gifted learners develop emotional regulation skills. At home, you can support your child by helping them:

- **Name the emotion**. Encourage your child to identify what they are feeling and what may have triggered the emotion.
- **Recognize body signals**. Help your child notice physical signs of frustration, worry, excitement, or overwhelm so they can recognize when they may need to pause and reset.
- **Normalize productive struggle**. Remind your child that challenge, mistakes, and revision are natural parts of learning.
- **Reflect afterward**. Once emotions have settled, discuss what worked, what didn't, and what strategy they might try next time they experience a similar situation.

Try asking: "When something feels frustrating or overwhelming, what helps your brain and body feel ready to problem-solve?"

Family Resources

Explore these resources for additional information and strategies for supporting emotional regulation at home:

Video: Emotional Regulation for Kids

Growing Balanced: Emotional Regulation for Kids- The Complete Parent Hub

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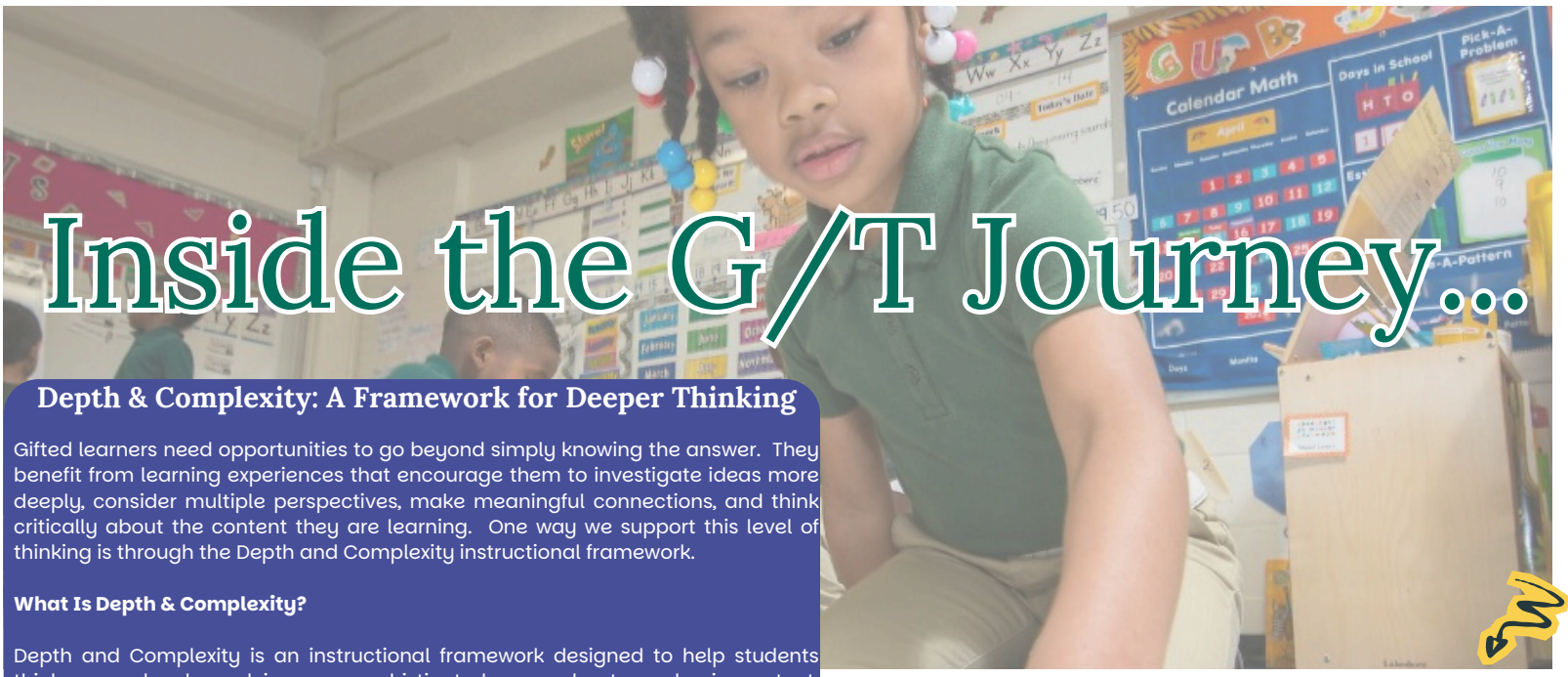

Inside the G/T Journey...

Depth & Complexity: A Framework for Deeper Thinking

Gifted learners need opportunities to go beyond simply knowing the answer. They benefit from learning experiences that encourage them to investigate ideas more deeply, consider multiple perspectives, make meaningful connections, and think critically about the content they are learning. One way we support this level of thinking is through the Depth and Complexity instructional framework.

What Is Depth & Complexity?

Depth and Complexity is an instructional framework designed to help students think more deeply and in more sophisticated ways about academic content. Rather than focusing only on what students are learning, the framework provides thinking tools that help students consider how they can explore and understand that content at a deeper level.

Meet the 11 Depth & Complexity Icons

Throughout the school year, we'll introduce families to these thinking tools and take a closer look at how individual icons can be used to deepen learning.



This Month's Focus: Details

When students use Details, they are encouraged to slow down, look closely, and identify the specific information that matters to understanding a larger idea. Details might include important facts, characteristics, features, attributes, evidence, clues, or supporting information within a topic.
For gifted learners, this means moving beyond simply identifying information to considering which details are significant, why they matter, and how they contribute to a deeper understanding as a whole.

For example, instead of only asking: **"What did you observe during the experiment?"**

Gifted students might be challenged to consider: **"Which specific details from your observations provide the strongest evidence for your conclusion?"**

The content may remain the same, but the level of thinking becomes deeper.

Family Challenge: Become a Detail Detective!
This month, challenge your gifted learner to become a Detail Detective. Choose an everyday object, image, text, experience, or situation and spend a few minutes examining it closely.

Ask:
"What details do you notice that someone else might have missed?" "Why do you think those details matter?"

Keep an eye out for next month's newsletter as we continue exploring the Depth and Complexity framework and introduce another thinking tool families can use to encourage deeper learning at home.

Campus Gifted Education Plans

Did you know? Every Houston ISD campus provides Gifted & Talented services, and campuses serving identified G/T students are required to develop and maintain a Campus Gifted Education Plan (C-GEP)?

Think of a C-GEP as a roadmap for gifted education on your child's campus. It outlines how the school will intentionally provide services, supports, and meaningful learning opportunities for gifted learners throughout the school year in alignment with Houston ISD expectations and the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students.

The C-GEP helps campuses plan for important components of the gifted learning experience, including appropriately challenging learning experiences, differentiated instruction, enrichment opportunities, social-emotional support, and opportunities to develop advanced-level products and performances.

While all campuses are expected to meet district and state requirements, how those services are delivered may vary based on:

- Campus service and programming models
- Student needs
- Staffing structures
- Scheduling considerations

This means G/T services may not look exactly the same from one Houston ISD campus to another. Each campus uses it's C-GEP to create an intentional approach to meeting the needs of its gifted learners while remaining aligned with district and state expectations.

Families are encouraged to review their campus's C-GEP to learn more about how gifted education comes to life at their child's school. If you have questions about your campus plan or how G/T services are implemented, connect with your campus G/T Coordinator or campus leadership team.

Stay Connected!

Supporting gifted learners is a shared commitment, and we value the connection between our G/T families, campuses, and district in creating meaningful experiences that help students grow, explore, and thrive.

We encourage you to stay engaged, ask questions, and continue learning alongside your gifted learner. For questions about Gifted & Talented services or opportunities, your campus G/T Coordinator is a great first point of contact, and the Houston ISD Gifted & Talented Department is also here to support you.

Be sure to look for our next G/T Family Newsletter, where we'll continue sharing helpful resources, program highlights, and ways to stay connected to gifted education across Houston ISD.

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