



GIFTED AND TALENTED HANDBOOK



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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEXAS STATE PLAN FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS

AN OVERVIEW

Throughout the United States, there has been a call for America's students to master more complex skills and to demonstrate understanding of more sophisticated content. In response, states throughout the country have increased their expectations for student performance. However, while basic competencies are being raised, often there is little done to enhance services for more advanced learners. **National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent**, published by the United States Department of Education in 1993, notes that, "Most American students are encouraged to finish high school and earn good grades. But students are not asked to work hard or master a body of challenging knowledge or skills. The message society often sends to students is to aim for academic **adequacy**, not academic **excellence** (p.1)."

To assure that this trend is reversed in Texas, the State Board of Education has adopted numerous incentives that encourage districts to support services that go beyond the minimum and that meet the needs of gifted learners. In order to express its commitment to high level learning opportunities for all students, the Texas State Board of Education adopts the following as its goal for services for gifted learners.

STATE GOAL FOR SERVICES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

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

MISSION STATEMENT

The Harmony Public Schools is committed to implementing a program that meets the unique social, emotional, and intellectual needs of gifted and talented students through the collaboration of students, educators, parents and community members that ensures opportunities for maximum growth and development for life long success.

Harmony Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, economic status, sex, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Providing students with an accelerated program to meet specific needs in a selected academic curriculum is the primary goal of the Harmony Public Schools Gifted and Talented Program. Additionally, the program provides students with unique opportunities to develop individual talents and to strengthen skills. Emphasis on a positive self-concept, relationships with others, and strategies to develop critical thinking skills enables students to become independent, self-directed learners.

Goals are focused in three specific areas:

- The gifted student will develop a realistic concept of self and work cooperatively with peers and adults.
- The gifted student will develop the higher level thinking skills of knowledge comprehension, synthesis, application, analysis, and evaluation in order to solve problems.
- The gifted student will create original projects that reflect critical thinking skills as supplemental learning to the regular classroom curriculum.

OBJECTIVES

Gifted/Talented students will

- develop critical thinking skills in order to solve problems logically.
- develop research skills and use information gathered to implement a group research project.
- demonstrate the ability to use creative problem solving strategies.
- recognize how change in and around their world affects their relationships.

DEFINITION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED

"... '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."

[Chapter 29, Subchapter D §29.121]

THE THREE-RING CONCEPTION OF GIFTEDNESS

Research on creative-productive people has consistently shown that although no single criterion can be used to determine giftedness, persons who have achieved recognition because of their unique accomplishments and creative contributions possess a relatively well-defined set of three interlocking clusters of traits. These clusters consist of above average, though not necessarily superior, ability, task commitment, and creativity (see Figure A). It is important to point out that no single cluster “makes giftedness.” Rather, it is the interaction among the three clusters that research has shown to be the necessary ingredient for creative-productive accomplishment (Renzulli, 1978). This interaction is represented by the shaded portion of Figure A. It is also important to point out that each cluster plays an important role in contributing to the display of gifted behaviors. This point is emphasized because one of the major errors that continues to be made in identification procedures is to overemphasize superior abilities at the expense of the other two clusters of traits.

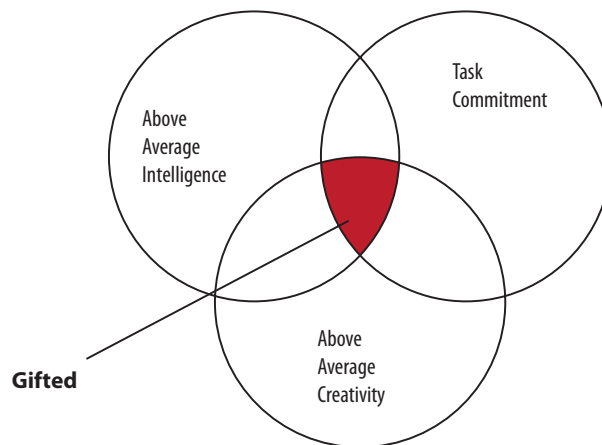


Figure A

1. Well Above Average Ability

Well above average ability can be defined in two ways:

- a. General ability
- b. Specific abilities

General Ability

High levels of abstract thinking, verbal and numerical reasoning, spatial relationships, memory and word fluency

Adaptation to and the shaping of novel situations encountered in the external environment

The automatization of information processing; rapid, accurate, and selective retrieval of information

Specific Abilities

- The application of various combination of the above general abilities to one or more specialized areas of knowledge or areas of human performance (e.g., the arts, leadership, administration)
- The capacity for acquiring and making appropriate use of advanced amounts of formal knowledge, tech-

nique, logistics, and strategy in the pursuit of particular problems or manifestation of specialized areas of performance

- The capacity to sort out relevant and irrelevant information associated with a particular problem or area of study or performance

2. Creativity

- Fluency, flexibility, and originality of thought
- Openness to experience; receptive to that which is new and different (even irrational) in the thoughts, actions, and products of oneself and others
- Curious, speculative, adventurous, and mentally playful; willing to take risks in thought and action, even to point of being uninhibited
- Sensitive to detail, aesthetic characteristics of ideas and things; willing to act upon and react to external stimulation and one's own ideas and feelings

3. Task Commitment

- The capacity for high levels of interest, enthusiasm, fascination, and involvement in a particular problem, area of study, or form of human expression
- The capacity for perseverance, endurance, determination, hard work, and dedicated practice
- The ability to identify significant problems within specialized areas; the ability to tune into major channels of communication and new development within given fields
- Setting high standards for one's work, maintaining an openness to self and external criticism, developing an aesthetic sense of taste, quality and excellence about one's own and work of others

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTEDNESS

General Intellectual Ability

- Comprehends abstract ideas and concepts
- Considers concepts and situations in which he/she has no personal experience
- Makes quick and valid generalizations and uses them in new situations
- Demonstrates skills in reasoning and evaluating situations
- Sees cause and effect
- Chooses and enjoys challenging tasks or problems
- Generates sophisticated and creative ideas and solutions
- Demonstrates great curiosity; asks how, why, and what if
- Chooses original methods and produces innovative products
- Is keenly observant

Social/Emotional/Behavioral

- Sense of Self
- Perfectionism Strong
- Ideas/Beliefs/Opinions
- Questions Authority
- Motivation for and Intense Focus on Tasks
- Withdrawal from Peers/Prefers Adults
- Subtle Sense of Humor/Original Jokes and Puns
- Boredom with Routine
- Sensitive to the Needs of Others
- Critical of Self and Others

BRIGHT CHILD VS. GIFTED LEARNER

(by Janice Szabos, Challenge Magazine)

A Bright Child

knows the answers

is interested

is attentive

has good ideas

works hard

answers the questions

top group

listens with interest

learns with ease

6-8 repetitions for mastery

understands ideas

enjoys peers

grasps the meaning

completes assignments

is receptive

copies accurately

enjoys school

absorbs information

technician

good memorizer

enjoys straight forward sequential presentation

is alert

is pleased with own learning

A Gifted Learner

asks the questions

is highly curious

is mentally and physically involved

has wild, silly ideas

plays around, yet tests well

discusses in detail, elaborates

beyond the group

shows strong feeling and opinions

already knows

1-2 repetitions for mastery

constructs abstractions

prefers adults

draws inferences

initiates projects

is intense

creates a new design

enjoys learning

manipulates information

inventor

good guesser

thrives on complexity

is keenly observant

is highly self-critical

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The Harmony Public Schools Gifted and Talented Program will focus on two domains; general intellectual and specific academic. The specific academic areas of focus are Mathematics, Science, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Computer.

Students in GT Program in Harmony are offered the following services:

- GT Program is available for students in grades K thru 12th.
- In the academic core areas of English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies the curriculum is differentiated to offer enriched and accelerated learning opportunities for the gifted learner. The curriculum will be differentiated in terms of content, process, and products. Students will be involved in inquiry based lessons, group problem-solving settings, independent investigations, and group discussions.
- **Pull-Out Program*** Option is available in the academic core areas of Math and English Language Arts for K thru 5th grade gifted and talented students. The Pull-Out Program design allows students to be grouped homogeneously with other gifted and talented students and participate in enriched academic experiences. The Pull-Out program is for students identified for receiving gifted services in Math, English Language Arts/Reading, Science, and/or Social studies. Students meet for one or two periods every week to work on activities, labs, and projects outside the scope of the standard curriculum. Enrichment and extension of advanced concepts are explored through a project-based application. Students in the Pull-Out Program are required to complete all regular class activities and assignments that are due or were assigned on the day/period that they leave these classes to attend the Pull-Out Program.
- **Custom Day program*** Option is available in the academic core areas of Math and English Language Arts for 6 thru 8th grade gifted and talented students. In addition to the five hours of differentiated instruction they get in their content areas, these students will be grouped homogeneously with other gifted and talented students and participate in advanced math and reading classes for another five hours every week.
- **After school program*** Option is available in the math, English language arts, social studies, science, and computer for K thru 12th grade gifted and talented students. Students meet for one or two hours every week to work on projects or prepare for academic competitions. They complete the work in school and do not take the projects home.

**The availability of the program may vary by campus and grade level.*

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| K-5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Differentiated instruction in core content areas.• Math Pull-out sessions (1 period per week)• English Language Arts/Reading Pull-out sessions (1 period per week)• After school program to work on a G/T project or prepare for Elementary school level academic competitions (1 or 2 hours per week) <hr/> |
| 6-8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advanced math instruction that might involve using computerized programs (5 periods per week)• Advanced reading instruction that might involve using computerized programs (5 periods per week)• After school program to work on a G/T project or prepare for Middle School level academic competitions (1 or 2 hours per week)• Eligible to take Pre-AP courses• Participation in Advanced Writing Program (www.myaccess.com)• Participation in G/T camps <hr/> |
| 9-12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduation under Distinguished High School Plan• Eligible to take Pre-AP and AP courses• After school program to work on a G/T project or prepare for High school level academic competitions (1 or 2 hours per week)• Participation in Advanced Writing Program (www.myaccess.com)• Participation in G/T camps |

**Services may vary from campus to campus*

ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS

MathCounts (Grades 6-8)

MATHCOUNTS is a national enrichment, club and competition program that promotes middle school mathematics achievement through grassroots involvement in every U.S. state and territory. MATHCOUNTS is one of the country's largest and most successful education partnerships involving volunteers, educators, industry sponsors and students. The MATHCOUNTS Competition Program provides the extra incentive and the perfect atmosphere for students to push themselves to achieve more in mathematics. Consisting of fun and creative problems, the MATHCOUNTS competitions have written and oral rounds, as well as individual and team components. Though challenging and non-routine, the competition problems focus on the 6th through 8th grade standards of the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics.



Science Olympiad (Grades 6-12)

Science Olympiad is an international non-profit organization devoted to improving the quality of science education, increasing student interest in science and providing recognition for outstanding achievement in science education by both students and teachers. These goals are accomplished through classroom activities, research, training workshops and the encouragement of intramural, district, regional, state and national tournaments. Science Olympiad tournaments are rigorous academic interscholastic competitions that consist of a series of team events, which students prepare for during the year. These challenging and motivational events are well balanced between the various science disciplines of biology, earth science, chemistry, physics and technology. There is also a balance between events requiring knowledge of science concepts, process skills and science applications.



Odyssey of the Mind (Grades K-12)

Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Team members apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics. They then bring their solutions to competition on the local, state, and world level. Thousands of teams from throughout the U.S. and from about 25 other countries participate in the program.

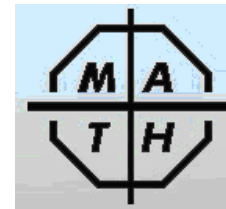


Science and Engineering Fairs (Grades 4-12)

The Science Fair offers an opportunity to display meritorious scientific talent through exhibits and to generate the interest of the public in the scientific abilities of students and teachers. Participants will compete within their schools, regions and the State. In addition, they



will have an opportunity to participate in International Science Fair organizations such as International Sustainable World Energy-Engineering-Environment Project Olympiad (I-SWEEEP) and Intel Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF).



The Math League (Grades 4-12)

The Math League is dedicated to bringing challenging mathematics materials to students. League specialties include math contests, books, and computer software designed to stimulate interest and confidence in mathematics for students from the 4th grade through high school. Over 1 million students participate in Math League contests each year. Contest questions are designed to cover a range of mathematical knowledge for each grade level. Questions on the contests never require any mathematics beyond the grade level tested. They're fun too!

Spelling Bee (Grades K-8)

Our purpose is to help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabularies, learn concepts, and develop correct English usage that will help them all their lives. In general terms, the program is open to students who have neither turned 16 nor passed beyond the eighth grade, and who attend schools that officially enrolled with our program for the current academic year.



Academic Pentathlon (Grades 6-8)

Middle school (sixth, seventh and eighth grade) students can compete in the Academic Pentathlon program. This program was founded in 1984 to encourage and reward academic excellence through the motivation of competitive challenge.

Teams are comprised of nine students like the decathlon team. The difference is that instead of ten events, the students compete in only five events: Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts (essay), and the Super Quiz, a public event covering a specific topic of study.



UIL Academics

The University Interscholastic League offers the most comprehensive literary and academic competitive program in the nation. It offers more than any other UIL division in terms of activities, with 22 high school and 18 elementary and junior high contests. More than a half million students participate in UIL academic contests.

These activities, which exist to complement the academic curriculum, are designed to motivate students as they acquire higher levels of knowledge, to challenge students to confront issues of importance, and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of specific skills.



American Mathematics Competition (AMC) (Grades 6-12)

The American Mathematics Competitions (AMC) is dedicated to the goal of strengthening the mathematical capabilities of our nation's youth. We believe that one way to meet this goal is to identify, recognize and reward excellence in mathematics through a series of national contests called the:



- American Mathematics Contest 8 (AMC 8),
- American Mathematics Contest 10 (AMC 10),
- American Mathematics Contest 12 (AMC 12),
- American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME), and
- United States of America Mathematical Olympiad (USAMO).

In addition to the 5 contests listed above, we also have a summer program, at which we choose the final six contestants for an international competition:

- Mathematical Olympiad Summer program (MOSP), and the
- International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO)

For over 50 years many excellent exams have been prepared by individuals throughout our mathematical community in the hope that all secondary students will have an opportunity to participate in these problem solving and enriching mathematics experiences. The AMC contests are intended for everyone from the average student at a typical school who enjoys mathematics to the very best student at the most special school.

Robotics Competitions (Grades 4-12)

Robotics competitions combine the excitement of sport with the rigors of science and technology. Under strict rules, limited resources, and time limits, robotics teams are challenged to raise funds, design a team "brand," hone teamwork skills, and build and program robots to perform prescribed tasks against a field of competitors. It's as close to "real-world engineering" as a student can get.



IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The identification process, conducted in Harmony Public Schools meet state requirements (§29.121 & TAC 89.1) and have been designed to ensure the identification of any student who demonstrates educational need for the services of the program under the established guidelines. The process consists of three steps:

1. Nomination
2. Screening/assessment
3. Qualification

1. Nomination

Students may be nominated by

- Parent(s),
- Teacher(s),
- Peers,
- Other Professional Personnel,
- And/or themselves

Nomination forms must be completed by the individual who nominates the child; however parents must give consent that the student be tested and evaluated. Parent Nomination Forms and Teacher/Professional Nomination Forms, available in the front office, are filled out by parents, teachers, peers, etc. and submitted to Gifted and Talented Identification committee.

Nominations can be made at any time during the school year, however, any testing and identification will be completed according to the Harmony assessment and identification schedule.

Written parental permission is required before screening/testing begins. No student may be denied access to Gifted and Talented Programs on the basis of race, creed, or handicapping conditions.

2. Screening/assessment

Students seeking admission to Harmony Public Schools Gifted and Talented Program are screened as described below:

Quantitative data:

Ability Tests consist of two parts:

Part I: To measure cognitive abilities through verbal and quantitative skills

Part II: To measure non-verbal abilities in reasoning and problem solving using spatial symbols

Achievement Tests are used to determine student academic level in the academic core areas of English/ Language Arts, Math, and Science.

Qualitative data:

i. Parent rating scale – Parents rate their children while filling in the nomination form

ii. Teacher rating scale – Teachers rate the nominated students

Testing may take place during the school hours, after-school, and/or weekend.

3. Qualification

Student’s percentiles and/or scores from the assessment instruments are plotted on the student profile. Each student’s profile is individually evaluated by the Gifted/Talented Committee. A student clearly qualifies for Gifted/Talented services if the evidence on the profile meets the district criteria. Parents are notified in writing of the G/T Committee’s decision.

4. G/T identification timeline

G/T Nomination	September
G/T Testing (CogAT + MAP) *	October
Parent & Teacher rating scales	November
G/T committee Meeting	December
Send parent notification letters	December
Placement appeals	January
Start G/T program for newly identified	January

** NWEA MAP achievement tests are administered as a part of HPS testing calendar several times during the school year.*

5. Additional Procedures

Appeals

Once the identification process is complete, parents or guardians are notified of the results. A parent/guardian or staff member may appeal an identification decision to the Gifted/Talented committee within 7 days of the receipt of the parent/guardian letter indicating the committee’s initial decision. Appeals must be made in writing by presenting additional information to the committee not previously seen by the committee. The committee will reconvene in order to consider the need for further assessment data or other information. Harmony Public Schools G/T committee decisions are final.

Furlough

At times a student may seek a furlough or have such a “leave of absence” recommended for many reasons: emotional trauma, family considerations, health issues or any other circumstances which would inhibit or

curtail the student's performance in the program.

The G/T Committee, the parent(s), and the student may agree to grant the student a furlough, by executing a Furlough Contract, for a period not to exceed one year. During the period of the contracted furlough, the G/T Facilitator or designee shall monitor the student's academic status and periodically report to the G/T Committee. At the end of the time period stated in the Contract, the student's progress shall be reassessed, and the student may re-enter the Gifted/Talented program, be removed from the program, or be placed on another furlough upon the decision of the G/T Committee.

The furlough may also be used prior to a formal exit from the program for those students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the learning opportunities of the Gifted/Talented program.

If a student does not return for readmission to the G/T Program at the end of the furlough period, the student will be exited from the program. The exited student may apply for admission to the G/T Program again at any time in the future, at which time the application will be processed following standard screening and placement procedures.

Reassessment

At the discretion of the campus G/T committee Harmony Public Schools may reassess identified G/T students:

- Every three years
- Before a student's transition into secondary school (5th grade)
- Before a student's transition into high school (8th grade)

A formal reassessment will occur with written parental permission or the student will be exited from services.

Exit

Occasionally, there may be students who are identified for the G/T Program who do not perform at expected standards in the program. A student shall be removed from the program at any time the G/T committee determines it is in the student's best interest and a furlough has been ineffective. If a parent requests their child be removed from the program, the G/T committee shall grant the request. Once a student is exited from the program he/she must adhere to the identification procedures and exhibit educational need to be readmitted.

The following guidelines specify when a student may be exited from the G/T program:

- Repeated failure to complete work assigned.
- Substantial difficulty in understanding work that other students do independently (without parental or tutorial assistance).
- Consistent pattern of low grades (C's, D's or F's) over 9 weeks.
- Behavioral concerns, distractions, etc.

Transfer

Students transferring into Harmony Public Schools may be placed in the G/T Program with appropriate information of previous G/T placement in the sending district. Without appropriate documentation such as screening records, previous ISD's criteria and parent approval, the incoming student may be screened for the G/T Program using the standard procedures and measurements. Harmony Public Schools reserves the right to administer its own measures if there is any question concerning the appropriate measures or other information received.

Grade acceleration

If a teacher or parent recommends grade acceleration for a G/T student who outperforms his/her peers in class, then the G/T coordinator and parent meet to discuss the student's case. The G/T coordinator collects data from the student's teachers and if there is agreement that the student will socially and academically succeed, then the student is scheduled for a state-accredited grade acceleration test (Exam for Acceleration).

Tests are ordered in four core areas: Math, English/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies. The student is expected to score 90 and above in those subject areas.

More information about grade acceleration and study guides for tests can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/ce/k16/cbe-ea/about/>

