



# **Gainesville Independent School District Gifted and Talented Services Handbook**

## **Gifted and Talented Handbook**

### **Philosophy**

Gainesville Independent School District recognizes students from all ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups, regardless of existing handicaps or disabilities, who may demonstrate an exceptional ability in academic or divergent thinking.

In accordance with the Texas Education Code 29.12, Gainesville Independent School District defines “gifted and talented” as a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who exhibits high-performance capability, or excels in a particular academic field. It is the goal of GISD to ensure all such students are provided with a variety of educational experiences that support their individual potential for excellence.

Gainesville Independent School District has adopted policies and designed programs to address the unique needs of those students identified by a local review committee as needing additional services through our gifted and/or talented program. Identified gifted and talented students are provided with ongoing educational services through the district’s gifted/talented programs and services.

### **Programs and Services**

#### 1-6th Grade

Driven by student inquiry and initiative, the gifted and talented class focuses on authentic, real-world problem-solving through the use of long-term student-designed projects. Students will further develop written and verbal communication skills, practice critical thinking, and demonstrate imaginative skills and time management while learning to collaborate with peer teams and outside experts. The goal of this class is to provide students with the necessary skills to think creatively, readily accept challenges, and take control of their own learning, ultimately preparing them to engage in a post-secondary environment.

At the elementary campuses, students attend gifted and talented classes during “flexible schedule” time at each individual campus and/or are clustered in a G/T trained teacher’s class. For specific days and times your student would attend gifted and talented classes, please contact your campus G/T teacher.

At the intermediate level, students identified as gifted and talented are served by a G/T-trained teacher through a dedicated G/T Advisory class. All core subject teachers are trained in the nature and needs of G/T students, and instruction is differentiated to allow for depth, complexity, and pacing appropriate for gifted and talented learners.

Gifted students in grades K-5 may also be served through our bi-lingual program.

### 7th-12th Grades

In grades 7 through 12, G/T students are placed in a dedicated G/T Advisory class and are required to enroll in at least one advanced course. All core subject teachers are trained in the nature and needs of G/T students, and instruction is differentiated to allow for depth, complexity, and pacing appropriate for gifted and talented learners. Contact your student's campus for further details.

## **Identification Process**

Gainesville Independent School District has designed programs to address the unique needs of students identified as gifted and/or talented through multiple qualitative and quantitative data reviewed by a committee trained to identify students with such characteristics. It is the goal of GISD to ensure all such students are provided with a variety of educational experiences that support their individual potential for excellence.

Students are nominated and screened at least once a year for services provided as a part of the program for gifted students. Students in grades K-12 shall be assessed and, if identified, provided services. (TEC §29.122 and 19 TAC §89.1(3)) Based on a review of information gathered during the assessment process, the selection committee recommends placement for students whose data reflect that program placement is the most appropriate educational setting.

The gifted/talented selection committee will include an assistant principal, counselor, G/T teacher, and a G/T-trained classroom teacher. Other persons may attend the meeting as approved by the counselor or campus principal. The majority of members of the selection committee have completed thirty (30) hours of training as delineated in 19 TAC §89.2(1).

Identification practices rely on several criteria to look for students with gifts and talents, including multiple time periods for screening and testing, types of information, and sources of information. No single criterion will ensure or prevent a student's identification as gifted. The selection committee's decision will be based on a thorough review of the student's individual profile.

Students identified as gifted/talented according to the criteria established by GISD, in accordance with the Texas Education Agency guidelines, will be notified in writing and invited to participate in the G/T program.

## Kindergarten-Grade 2

- Classroom teachers, parents, and community members may refer a student in grades K-2 using the district referral form.
- For current school year testing, referral forms must be submitted during the offered November dates of the assessment year. All referrals received after that date will be accepted for the following school year.

## Grades 3-12

- Classroom teachers, parents, and community members may refer a student in grades 3-12 using the district referral form. Students may also self-refer.
- For current school year testing, referral forms must be submitted during the offered November dates of the assessment year. All referrals after that date will be accepted for the following school year.

## **Assessment, Screening, and Data Collection**

Multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data are used to determine whether or not a student qualifies for the Gifted and Talented program at Gainesville ISD. No student will be refused services based solely on one assessment or data point. Accommodations will be provided for students identified with an IEP, 504, or EB in accordance with their regularly provided accommodations within the classroom. Some of the data points considered for qualification are

- Universal Screener Data
- Parent Inventory
- State Achievement Tests
- Teacher Inventory
- Minimum of two overall intellectual ability assessments
- Additional observations, data points, etc.

Gainesville ISD is unable to use assessments conducted outside of a school environment such as those conducted by a private counselor or clinician when making decisions for gifted and talented placement.

Gainesville ISD does not support test preparation courses and/or materials as they frequently skew test results making it difficult to determine appropriate placement. It has been observed that practicing for abilities and achievement tests can result in test anxiety on the day of the test. Parents are encouraged to relay to their children that the test(s) they are taking will provide information to the school district about how to best provide for their educational needs.

Gainesville ISD does not provide any information that may potentially invalidate student scores or pertinent information obtained from assessing our students. We have an agreement with our testing vendors to keep the contents of the assessments secure and confidential. Providing form numbers and/or levels will diminish the integrity of the tests that we use.

## **Transfer Students**

If a student transfers from another district (out of state or in-state) and was receiving Gifted and Talented services in their previous district, documentation of those services and prior assessment data that is no more than two years old, along with other qualifying evidence, must be present in the student's transfer paperwork and presented to the campus committee. The committee will review the data to determine whether there is enough evidence to support the student's G/T services in Gainesville. If the team determines there is sufficient evidence, the student will be matriculated into the GISD Gifted and Talented program within thirty school days of enrollment. Sufficient evidence will be considered as data comparable to assessments utilized in Gainesville for G/T screening and scores comparable to those accepted in Gainesville ISD. Letters from previous teachers, state assessments, student portfolios, etc. will all be reviewed in making a determination. If evidence is not sufficient, the student will be retested and brought before the committee for placement within thirty days of enrollment.

## **Identification Timeline**

**Ongoing** Assessment for students in grades K-12 transferring into the district from another gifted program, within 30 school days of enrollment.

**November** Referrals are submitted online for spring testing for students currently enrolled in grades K-12.

**January** Testing begins for students referred during the November window of the previous fall; Kindergarten screener.

**March 1** Deadline for parent notification of assessment results for spring testing session

Qualifying elementary students will begin receiving services as soon as parent permission for services is received; secondary students will join the dedicated advisory class the following fall and be required to enroll in at least one advanced class or dual credit course the following school year and each subsequent year thereafter to remain in the program.

## **Furlough Services**

Due to a variety of circumstances, students may need to furlough a year of G/T services. Upon parent/guardian completion of a furlough request and approval by the campus principal, a student may furlough G/T services for up to one academic year. If a student needs to furlough for a second year, s/he will be exited from the G/T program.

If a secondary student does not enroll in at least one advanced course or dual credit course, s/he will be automatically furloughed for that semester. If s/he fails to enroll in advanced coursework for two semesters, the student will be automatically exited from the G/T program. Furlough requests will be available through the campus G/T contact.

## **Exit Services**

If students wish to exit Gifted and Talented services, parents/guardians must complete an exit form and meet with the campus principal to determine if exiting the program is the best decision for the student. The Advanced Academics Coordinator should receive all documentation prior to exit. The student will be required to be reassessed and qualify through committee decision should s/he wish to return to G/T services.

Students may also be exited from the program if the committee determines placement is not in the student's best interest, based upon multiple criteria. Parents/guardians will be consulted regarding any exit decision and the appropriate placement for a student.

Exit requests will be available through the campus G/T contact.

## **Reassessment for Non-Qualifying Students**

If a student is assessed for Gifted and Talented services and does not qualify, s/he may be referred for reevaluation the following school year. We encourage parents and teachers to review previous data and determine if reassessing benefits the student, and to consider the social and emotional aspects repeated testing may have.

## **Appeals of Committee Decisions**

Placement decisions may be appealed in writing within ten business days of notification and new data must be presented that reflects the student's need for services. This should include student work and accomplishments as well as written letters of recommendation. Further instructions can be found on the Appeal Form. The appeal process is as follows:

1. Campus G/T Committee & campus principal
2. District G/T Committee
3. Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction
4. Superintendent

## **Parent Involvement**

Parent involvement is a welcome and essential part of any successful school program. A parent advisory committee provides input on assessment and programming decisions twice a year. Parents are invited to attend Gifted and Talented project presentations each spring at the elementary campus. A G/T parent night and orientation will be offered each fall semester to help parents better understand the nature and needs of gifted children as well as our district program.

The district evaluates the effectiveness of the program annually and uses the data to modify and update district and campus improvement plans. Parents are included and encouraged to offer feedback in this process.

## **Professional Development**

Through continuous learning and professional development opportunities, teachers receive professional learning for differentiating instruction for individual student needs, learning styles, and abilities. Teachers utilize effective, collaborative lesson design and planning to demonstrate visible, engaging learning for all abilities.

Teachers who provide services for gifted students are required to participate in an initial 30 hours of staff development which includes the nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessing student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted learners. Teachers responsible for providing services for gifted learners without the required training must complete the 30-hour training requirement within one semester.

Additionally, all teachers who provide instruction and services for gifted students receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education. Administrators and counselors with authority over program decisions have a minimum of six hours of professional development, which must include the nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options.

## **Forms**

Forms regarding Furlough, Exit, Referral, and other Gifted Services can be found on the G/T page of the district website, or you may contact the Advanced Academics Coordinator.