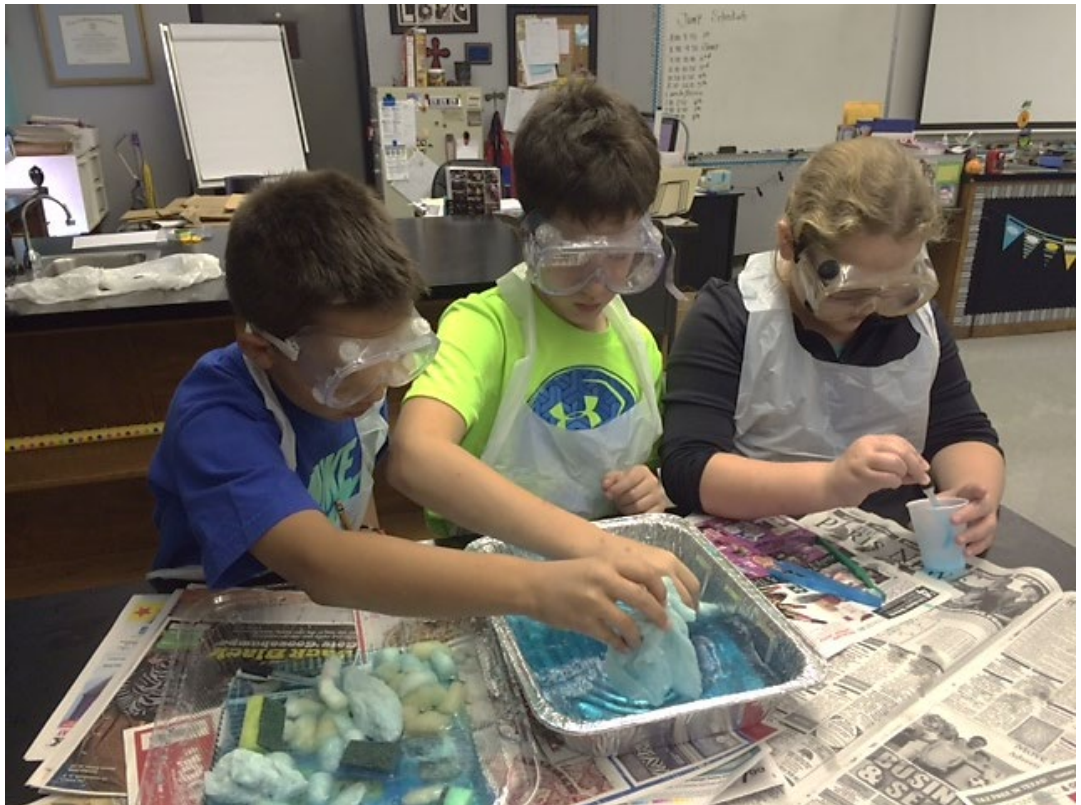


# GIFTED & TALENTED ADVANCED ACADEMICS NORTH LAMAR ISD



## FOREWORD

The *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* was adopted by the Texas State Board of Education that included a commitment to high-level learning opportunities for GT learners expressed in the following goal:

*"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."*

This guide has been developed for parents, educators, school board members, and other interested community members to enhance understanding of North Lamar Independent School District's special programs for academically gifted students. The guide includes a program overview, program goals, identification process, a curriculum overview, evaluation procedures, and parental/community involvement activities.



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# **GIFTED AND TALENTED (GT) ADVANCED ACADEMICS PROGRAM**

## **OVERVIEW**

Texas Education Code 29.121 defines a gifted and talented student as “a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential of 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, or excels in a specific academic field.”

The North Lamar Independent School District recognizes that the abilities, needs and interests of students vary greatly. To that end, we expect that students will benefit from differentiated instructional programs that develop and challenge their unique capabilities within a framework of instructional activities that fosters creativity and productivity. Furthermore, students who are referred and subsequently assessed, who then meet all state and district criteria for services in the gifted and talented program, will have the opportunity to work within the district's specialized gifted and talented curriculum.

Students in grades Kindergarten through grade 12 will have an array of learning opportunities such as, but not limited to:

- instructional and organizational patterns that enable students to work together as a group, to work with other students, and to work independently
- a continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced-level products and performances
- in-school, and when possible, out-of-school options relevant to the student's area of strength that are available during the school year
- opportunities to accelerate in areas of strength

## **RATIONALE**

Why do gifted students need a special program and curriculum? How does their curriculum differ from the regular program? The answers to these questions form rationale for North Lamar's Gifted and Talented/Advanced Academics program.

All students, including gifted students, have the right to educational programs that meet their learning needs. Research shows that gifted students must be

educated in a system that recognizes their strengths and needs and provides them opportunities to develop academically and socially. Typically, gifted students differ from their age-peers in three very important ways. First, they absorb information at a faster rate and process it more efficiently. Second, they are often able to comprehend information with greater depth than their classmates, showing surprising insight and understanding. Third, they often have interests that are more typical of older children or even adults. These three learning differences are frequently enhanced by other complementary characteristics: independence, persistence, nonconformity, and motivation.

## **SECTION I: STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

### **REFERRALS**

When trying to decide whether to refer students, parents and teachers should review research regarding characteristics of gifted children. A few characteristics to consider and usually found in combination:

- achievement beyond grade level
- in-depth understanding of ideas
- solves problems critically or creatively
- manipulates information to construct new ideas
- detail in presentation of an idea through any medium
- creative responses/ideas inside or outside the classroom
- interest in topics or events unusual for the age level
- enjoys conversing with adults
- keen sense of humor

Students may be referred for the gifted and talented program at any time by teachers, counselors, parents, or other interested persons.

In the spring of the current school year, all kindergarten students are automatically considered for gifted/talented services. Students currently enrolled in grades 1-12 at North Lamar ISD, who are not yet identified in the GT program, may be referred by a parent and/or teacher for consideration and screening during the spring referral period. Students tested during the previous spring assessment period and who do not qualify for admittance will be eligible for referral in the following spring assessment period.

Students new to the district may be referred for consideration and screening. Students, who have previously been identified as gifted students in another district, must meet the North Lamar ISD criteria presently used for Gifted and Talented screening. Upon enrollment, documentation of GT testing results must be provided to the school counselor. This documentation must include scores

using at least three different testing instruments. The selection committee shall review the student's records and conduct assessment procedures when necessary to determine if placement in the District's program for gifted and talented students is appropriate.

## **SCREENING AND IDENTIFICATION**

The District shall provide assessment opportunities to complete the screening process for referred students at least once per school year. The District shall schedule a gifted and talented program awareness session for parents that provides an overview of the assessment procedures and services for the program prior to beginning the screening and identification process.

Referred students in grades K-12, for whom parental written consent is obtained before any special testing is conducted and is on file, will be assessed and, if identified per state and local criteria, offered GT services. All student information collected during the screening and identification process shall be an educational record, subject to the protections set out in board policies at FL – Student Records. Data and procedures assure that all populations of the district have access to assessment.

The *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* calls for qualitative and quantitative data collected through three (3) or more measures and used to determine whether a student needs gifted/talented services. North Lamar ISD uses nationally recognized instruments for this purpose that will periodically be reviewed and updated or changed as appropriate to meet the needs of the students in the district.

Students will be scheduled for and administered qualitative and quantitative measures that typically include reasoning tests, creativity tests, intelligence tests, achievement tests, and observation checklists completed by teachers. Other measures may include, but may not be limited to, teacher's classroom observations, and student/parent conferences with the GT committee, and student work products. Assessment results are recorded on the GT student Identification Profile form by a test administrator who has the current qualifications for assessing and teaching GT students.

A special GT selection committee composed of at least three (3) local district educators with current GT qualifications (according to state requirements) considers individual results and determines final identification of eligible students. Qualification in assessment measures is the standard for placing students in the GT program. These assessments are used to identify cognitive ability, creativity, reasoning aptitude, and other characteristics of gifted students.

North Lamar ISD shall provide written notification to parents of students who were assessed for services. The GT teacher from each campus will notify counselors, and teachers of the student's results. Parents of students may request a conference regarding their child's test scores. Participation in any program or services provided for gifted students shall be voluntary, and the District shall obtain written permission from the parents before placing a student in the gifted and talented program. Once a child is identified GT, he or she will remain in the GT program, unless there is a request for removal from the program.

Parents may appeal the decision of the GT selection committee according to North Lamar board policy EHBB (Local). Appeals shall be made first to the campus GT selection committee and within fifteen (15) days of receiving notification of testing results. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with FNG (Local) beginning at Level Two.

If the District reassess students in the gifted and talented program, the reassessment shall be based on a student's performance in response to services and shall occur no more than once in elementary grades, once in middle school grades, and once in high school grades.

## **TRANSFER STUDENTS**

When a student identified as gifted by a previous school district enrolls in the District, the selection committee shall review the student's records and conduct assessment procedures when necessary to determine if placement in the District's program for gifted and talented services is appropriate.

[See FDD(LEGAL) for information regarding transfer students and the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children]

A student who transfers from one campus in the District to the same grade level at another District campus shall continue to receive services in the District's gifted and talented program.

## **FURLOUGH PROCEDURES**

North Lamar may place on furlough any student who is unable to maintain satisfactory performance or whose educational needs are not being met within the structure of the gifted and talented program. A furlough may be initiated by the district, the parent, or the student. A committee made up of the student's regular teacher(s), GT teacher, parents, counselor and/or principal should meet to discuss any student problems before a decision is made to furlough a student.

In accordance with the Board-approved program, a furlough shall be granted for specified reasons and for a specified period of time. At the end of the furlough, the student may reenter the gifted and talented program, be placed on another furlough, or be exited from the program.

## **EXIT PROCEDURES**

Student performance in the program shall be monitored. A student shall be removed from the program at any time a selection committee or parent determines it is in the student's best interest. If a student or parent requests removal from the program, the selection committee shall meet with the parent and student before honoring the request.

A parent, student, or educator may appeal any final decision of the selection committee regarding exit from the gifted and talented program. Appeals shall be made first to the selection committee. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with FNG(LOCAL) beginning at Level Two.

## **WITHDRAWN STUDENTS**

When a GT student withdraws from the district, the parent or receiving school may request that the GT teacher send the student profile sheet, progress reports, and other appropriate assessment information to the new school.

## **SECTION II: SERVICE DESIGN**

The North Lamar Independent School District will provide educational opportunities for gifted and talented students that will allow them to develop their potential. We will also encourage them toward lifetime goals that are consistent with their desires and talents. To encourage this development, we will evaluate progress of the following student goals:

- Self-expression and sharing of unique ideas
- Effective listening and observation skills
- Respecting others and working well with school staff and peers
- Understanding and acceptance of new ideas and concepts
- Asking insightful questions
- Producing quality assignments
- Finding creative solutions to problems



- Having a good attitude and engaging in learning

### **SECTION III: CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**

Considering these learning needs, gifted students come to school with different credentials than most other students. They require programs that allow them to work at their own pace, explore topics covered by the conventional curriculum in greater depth, and pursue their own interests. The GT curriculum is designed to support, extend, enhance, and enrich the core curriculum so as to respond to these needs.

The North Lamar GT/Advanced Academics Program will follow basic goals when implementing its curriculum for gifted students:

- The curriculum for gifted students must be defensibly differentiated from the regular curriculum in complexity, depth, and range.
- The curriculum must include a continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced level products and performances.
- The curriculum must be designed to provide an array of learning activities for the gifted learners relevant to the student's area(s) of strength.

At times the curriculum for the gifted involves the use of course content, methods, and materials beyond those practical for other students at the same age and grade level. Differentiating the curriculum involves formulating student goals and objectives, varying instructional strategies, providing learning experiences, and evaluating results.

#### **ELEMENTARY LEVEL (K-5)**

In our elementary schools, GT students will experience two or more approaches to curriculum. In the regular and GT classroom, teachers will provide the state and district curriculum. The regular classroom teachers will also work with GT teachers regarding appropriate differentiation for their GT student(s). In the pull-out program students will work with a specialist in gifted and talented curriculum and strategies who will provide a wide variety of instructional opportunities, including comprehensive curricular and cross-curricular units, extension and enrichment of curriculum in the specific core area(s) of giftedness (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies).

Gifted students at the elementary level are not required to make up work missed in the classroom during the pullout sessions. They are responsible for the knowledge covered in the classroom during pullout. They are not, however,

responsible for the work (worksheets, assignments, etc.) Classroom teachers will adjust instructional schedules to provide for student needs. Depth and complexity will be added through the modification of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) concept. The application of depth may be done through the language of the discipline, details, patterns, trends, unanswered questions, rules, and ethics. Complexity may be added through big ideas or generalizations and different points of view.

## **SECONDARY LEVEL (6-12)**

In our middle school and high school, GT students will continue to receive complexity and rigor through subject specific Pre-AP and AP courses offered. Each Pre-AP course follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) with additional ancillary materials to enhance the rigor and quality of instruction for the GT student as well as collaborative projects and community involvement.

The AP courses at the high school level allow GT students to participate in college-level course work and earn college credit through Advanced Placement exams in May. These courses are approved by the CollegeBoard™ as comparable to higher education courses and are audited for their quality of instruction and rigor prior to approval.

In AP classrooms, the focus is not on memorizing facts and figures, instead, GT students engage in intense discussions, solve problems collaboratively, and learn to write clearly and persuasively. According to the CollegeBoard™ reports, students that participate in AP courses have a higher percentage of success in college than students enrolled in regular courses.

## **SECTION IV: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

At North Lamar ISD, all personnel involved in the planning, creation, and delivery of services to gifted and talented students possess the knowledge required to develop and provide appropriate options and differentiated curricula.

The expectations of our teachers are as follows:

- ☐ An understanding of how students learn in a particular content area and how best to scaffold learning support for them, pedagogical content knowledge.
- ☐ Increased knowledge of the subject matter with a focus on higher-level questions and cooperative learning activities.
- ☐ Positive commitment, passion, and dedication in subject area as demonstrated by student engagement and success in the course.

- ❑ Promote the use of various instructional strategies that encourage students to development critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.
- ❑ Use diverse teaching and assessment strategies including an appropriate mix of technologies and media.
- ❑ Engage in substantial professional discourse and reflection, undertake research, and pursue other related activities to keep their knowledge base and repertoire of skills and techniques current including electronic media.
- ❑ Receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education;
- ❑ Secondary Pre-AP and AP teachers attend a 30 hour AP Summer Institute every three years.

## **SECTION V: FAMILY & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

North Lamar ISD believes that the GT/Advanced Academics Program is much more fun and effective if parents are included as partners in the educational process. Parents will receive information related to program objectives and activities and they in turn, can offer resources and assistance that contribute to the program's success.

Sources of information important to parents include the district web page, school publications, newsletters, and/or other published items. Information about other programs that are optional such as university summer programs for the gifted may also be included. Parents are regularly informed of meetings, sent updates on information, and asked to provide input. Families of gifted students are encouraged to provide information and suggestions about services that are planned for the gifted program.

The district shall annually evaluate the effectiveness of the district's gifted and talented program, and the results of the evaluation shall be used to modify and update the district and campus improvement plans. The district shall include parents in the evaluation process and shall share the information with Board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, students in the gifted and talented program, and the community.

North Lamar ISD informs families and community members about training available to address factors that contribute to student success. Parent conferences, information letters, survey, and other handouts reflect special attention to the needs of gifted students.

Through the combined efforts of families, the community, students, and staff, an enriching program is offered to students of North Lamar ISD.

## **SECTION VI: PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The District shall annually evaluate the effectiveness of the district's gifted and talented program, and the results of the evaluation shall be used to modify and update the District and campus improvement plans. The District shall include parents in the evaluation process and shall share the information with Board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, students in the gifted and talented program, and in the community.

The District's gifted and talented program shall address effective use of funds for programs and services consistent with the standards in the state plan for gifted and talented students.

The District shall annually report to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) regarding funding used to implement the District's gifted and talented program. The District shall annually certify to TEA:

1. The establishment of a gifted and talented program by the District; and
2. That the District's program is consistent with the state plan for gifted and talented students.

## **COMMUNITY AWARENESS**

The District shall ensure that information about the District's gifted, talented program is available to parents and community members, and that they have an opportunity to develop an understanding of and support for the program.

Contact Information: Mark Russell, G/T Coordinator, [mrussell@northlamar.net](mailto:mrussell@northlamar.net)  
903-737-2003 ext. 5034