

***Gunter ISD
Gifted & Talented
Program Guide***



CONTENTS

Definition & Purpose.....	3
State Goals.....	4
Student Assessment.....	4
Identification.....	4
Nomination.....	5
Screening.....	5
Selection.....	6
Referral Process.....	7
Reassessments.....	9
Furlough.....	9
Exit Provisions.....	9
Transfer Procedures.....	10
Appeal Process.....	10
Professional Development.....	11
Program Organization.....	11
Student Accountability.....	11
Curriculum & Instruction.....	12
Program Evaluation.....	12

Gunter Independent School District **DISCOVERY PROGRAM**

Definition and Purpose

Gunter Independent School District provides a gifted and talented program for students in grades kindergarten through twelve according to the guidelines mandated by state law, Section 29.121-123 of the Texas Education Code. Subchapter D, 29.121, states that “‘Gifted and talented student’ 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.” “Each school district shall adopt a process for identifying and serving gifted and talented students in the district and shall establish a program for those students in each grade level.” (Education Code 29.122) “The State Board of Education shall develop and periodically update a state plan for the education of gifted and talented students to guide school districts in establishing and improving programs for identified students.” (Education Code 29.123)

The Gunter ISD gifted education plan conforms to state law and rule and follows the legally mandated “State Plan for the Education of the Gifted and Talented” developed by the Division of Advanced Academic Services of the Texas Education Agency.

Gunter ISD has as its goal to educate every child to the fullest of his/her potential. In the process of helping each learner reach this potential, it is important that individual differences be recognized. Based on the view that each student has a special and unique potential, the philosophy of Gunter Independent School District Discovery Program reflects an understanding of the unique social, emotional, and intellectual needs of gifted and talented students and a commitment to providing appropriate educational opportunities to accommodate these needs and differences in students. Gifted and talented students are those who excel consistently or who show the potential to excel in the area of general intellectual ability. Usually 3-5% shall be identified through the use of multiple criteria. Gunter ISD recognizes that gifted students, in order to realize their contribution to self and society, require a differentiated educational program and/or services beyond those normally offered in the regular school program. The Gunter ISD recognizes that students identified as gifted and talented can come from all races and socioeconomic groups.

The Discovery Program of Gunter ISD will challenge students to apply their exceptional abilities by utilizing higher level thinking skills to develop intellectual curiosity in critical, creative, and productive thinking. Students will demonstrate relevancy of learning by demonstrating their ability to identify and solve problems. While the Discovery Program is designed to meet the unique needs of identified gifted students, it shall appropriately reinforce and be compatible with other programs in the school district.

State Goals for Services for Gifted Students

Student 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/or performances of students of similar age, experience, or environment. High school graduates who have participated in services for gifted students will have products and/or performances of professional quality as part of their program services. [Texas State Board of Education, Sept. 2009]

The State Plan is divided into five sections: *Student Assessment, Service Design, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, and Family-Community Involvement*. Each of these sections lists the in compliance (required of all school districts in the State of Texas), recommended, and exemplary practices school districts may employ. To achieve recognized or exemplary program status, a school district must apply to the Texas Education Agency and submit its program for agency review and designation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

The Gunter ISD Discovery Program is based on general intellectual ability. This is defined as general intelligence and aptitudes or abilities to reason, perceive, and understand. Assessment of students for the Discovery Program includes multiple measures of general intellectual ability. Qualitative and quantitative measures are used in the identification process. 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 committee reviews each student's profile, which is identified by number rather than name, and makes a decision regarding placement based on committee consensus.

All populations of the district have access to assessment and services offered as part of the program for gifted students regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic position, language proficiency, or disability. Board policies on student assessment are reviewed at least once every three years and modified as needed.

Identification

The identification process includes three stages: nomination of students to the program, screening of students during which the pertinent information is gathered and prepared for committee review, and selection of students from whom the gifted program is the appropriate educational placement. The nomination process for services provided as part of the Discovery Program is conducted in the spring of each year. Kindergarten and first grade students are identified before March 1st, with their screening conducted in February. For students in grades 2-12 screening begins in March.

Nomination

Nominations are solicited from a variety of informed sources. A parent may nominate his/her child by completing the parent nomination form. A teacher, counselor, or administrator may nominate a student by completing a professional nomination form. A high school student may nominate himself/herself by completing the parent nomination form. A student will automatically be considered nominated if he/she scores in the 8th or 9th Stanine by age on the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test.

When nominating a student for screening into the gifted program, typical behaviors and characteristics exhibited by students who are gifted/talented should be considered. These include the following common behaviors:

- *intense, sustained interest
- *high motivation
- *extensive/detailed memory
- *prompt recall
- *advanced vocabulary
- *inquisitive nature
- *rapid acquisition of information
- *sound judgment
- *broad base of knowledge
- *advanced concept formations
- *analogical thinking or reasoning
- *keen observations

Students who are gifted in a particular discipline will display many of these traits consistently or have the potential to do so. Students will not exhibit these behaviors in identical ways or at the same time. Only a small group of students, approximately 5%, is identified as gifted/talented and is placed in the Discovery Program.

The nomination process will be advertised annually by each campus using two or more of the following methods:

- *letter of announcement sent home via each student
- *announcement in district newsletter
- *posted on district website
- *announcement in local newspaper
- *campus meeting
- *other communication tools deemed effective by the campus principal

The principal or designee will communicate nomination procedures and timelines to all professional and paraprofessional staff members.

*NOTE – The word nomination is used to describe a process of identifying a pool of students for consideration for the program. By completing forms, the Discovery Committee is asking others for their perception of students.

Screening

During this phase, a parent meeting is held during which all parents of nominated students are informed regarding the Discovery Program and the screening process. Parent permission is secured before the screening process continues. Next a profile/matrix is to be completed displaying the criteria used to access the student. Students are identified by number on the profile/matrix to maintain anonymity.

A separate folder for collecting screening data will be established for each student in the screening pool and will be maintained by the gifted and talented coordinator who assures its security, but makes it available to those who need to utilize its information.

Screening provisions assure the fair assessment of students with special needs, such as the culturally different, the economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities. Special efforts will be made to secure nominations of students who are culturally different, economically disadvantaged, or who have special needs. Examples of efforts to be employed may include:

- *individual conferences with parents of students
- *meetings with parents through a translator when the first language is one other than English
- *training teachers in the methods of identifying gifted minority students

As appropriate, students will be assessed in languages they understand or with nonverbal based tests. In no way will the process discriminate, either by omission or commission, against any person or group for reasons of sex, race, creed, handicapping condition, ethnic origin, or religious preference.

All screening committee members will translate the collected data on each student to point score value using the identification matrix.

Students already placed in the Discovery Program will not be re-screened. Additional nominations for the Discovery Program will not be accepted after the nomination and screening process have been completed.

Selection

The selection committee will be composed of the persons who have served on the identification and screening committee. This group must be composed of at least three campus educators who have completed the minimum of thirty (30) hours of gifted/talented professional development including the nature and needs of gifted students and who are current with the six hour update training as required in 19 TAC 89.2(2). The campus principal and the campus counselor (with completion of six hours professional development which includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options for gifted students) may also serve on the selection committee. The selection committee may consider information gathered by Section 504, ARD, or other campus committees as appropriate. Committee members' credentials will be kept on file in the district administration office in personnel records.

One of the selection committee's most important assignments is to use their professional judgment to determine which students might benefit from the gifted program. The selection process is characterized by consideration of each student in the nomination pool by a committee of professionally qualified persons. The student's screening forms will be reviewed by the committee on each campus. Final selection procedures will consider all students who might reasonably benefit from the program. The selection committee is responsible for the final selection of students to be included in the gifted program. Minutes from the selection committee will be kept at the administration building.

Participation in the Discovery Program is voluntary and requires written permission of the student's parent or legal guardian.

Referral Process

Kindergarten and Grade One:

- *Nomination submitted (annually in mid-January)
- *File created and student assigned an identification number
- *Letter sent to parent requesting permission to conduct screening
- *Appropriate data gathered which may include:
 - *Individual progress or grades
 - *Teacher rating
 - *TPRI reading test

Those students showing a preponderance of evidence that gifted services may be needed will proceed to the following levels of assessment which may include:

- *Iowa Test of Basic Skills
- *OLSAT
- *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking
- *Draw a Man
- *NNAT- Naglieri Nonverbal Assessment
- *Data entered on identification profile/matrix
- *Selection committee receives profile/matrix for review/consideration
- *Section committee meets to make placement decision
- *Parent notification of placement or non-placement
- *Permission for placement secured
- *Appropriate teachers and principal notified of placement or non-placement
- *Gifted services begin by March 1
- *Appeals process outlined in district policy

Levels of Acceptance: 4 Standards out of seven total must be met, one of which is criterion *Draw a Man or *Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. Refer to the matrix for Kindergarten and first grade for the 7 standards which are considered.

Grades Two through Eight:

- *Nominations submitted (annually in March)
- *Parent meeting for nominated students' parents
- *Parent permission to conduct screening
- *File created and student assigned an identification number
- *Appropriate data gathered which may include:
 - *ITBS – Reading and Math Composite Scores
 - *Otis Lennon Mental Abilities Test
 - *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking
 - *Scales for Identifying Gifted & Talented (SIGS)

- *Data entered on identification profile/matrix
- *Selection committee receives profile/matrix for review/consideration
- *Section committee meets to make placement decision
- *Parent notification of placement or non-placement
- *Permission for placement secured
- *Appropriate teachers and principal notified of placement or non-placement
- *Students will be scheduled into appropriate classes for the next year.
- *Gifted services begin the following school year.
- *Appeals process outlined in district policy.

[Level of Acceptance: The student must score a total of 18 or higher on the matrix for Grades 2-8 in order for the committee to consider placement in the Discovery Program. Refer to the Grade 2-8 matrix for the components.]

Grades Nine through Twelve

- *Nomination submitted (annually in March)
- *Parent meeting for nominated students' parents
- *Parent permission to conduct screening
- *File created and student assigned an identification number
- *Appropriate data gathered which may include:
 - *Otis Lennon scores
 - *Achievement test scores
 - *Teacher checklist
 - *Torrance Test
 - *Student products/portfolio

[Level of Acceptance: The student must score a total of 18 or higher on the matrix for Grades 9-12 in order for the committee to consider placement in the Discovery Program. Refer to the Grade 9-12 matrix for the components.]

- *Data entered on identification matrix
- *Selection committee receives profile/matrix for review/consideration
- *Selection committee meets to make placement decision
- *Parent notified of placement or non-placement
- *Permission for placement secured
- *Appropriate teachers and principals notified of placement or non-placement
- *Schedule of classes prepared to begin gifted services the next school year (those students selected for the Discovery Program will be served in at least one of the four core areas.)
- *Appeals process outlined in district policy.

Written policies for student identification are approved by the Board of Trustees, and the district's policy outlines these procedures. Information on the identification process is provided annually to parents.

Reassessments

The district will not perform routine assessment.

Furloughs

The student furlough policy allows for students to have a leave of absence from the Discovery Program services for specified reasons and for up to a year without being exited from the program. Students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the structure of the Discovery Program may be placed on furlough by the selection committee. The purpose of such a furlough is to provide the student an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the selection committee. A furlough also may be granted at the request of the student and/or parent based on “good cause.”

A student may be furloughed for a period of time, up to one year, deemed appropriate by the selection committee. At the end of the furlough, the student’s progress shall be reassessed, and the student may reenter the gifted program, be removed from the program, or be placed on another furlough if the one year period has not been exceeded.

Exit Provisions

Student performance in the Discovery Program shall be monitored. In spite of careful identification procedures, there may be a few cases in which students will need to exit the program.

1. A parent may request in writing that his/her child exit the Discovery Program. The building principal, the Discovery teacher, and parent will meet to determine if the exit is in the best interest of the student. If the parent then feels exiting is the best procedure, the student will leave the Discovery Program at the earliest possible date. Parents should understand that once a child has exited the program, it is highly unlikely that he/she will re-enter the program.
2. A student may be exited from the program if his/her work performance indicates that he/she is unable to satisfactorily meet the requirements of the class. The teacher has the responsibility of making the student aware of his/her lack of satisfactory performance. The teacher will also work with the student to try to correct continuous problems with activities or assignments in the Discovery Program.
 - A. The teacher will privately talk to the student informing him/her of the areas of weakness. The teacher will offer to help the student correct the areas of weakness.
 - B. If, after two weeks, an increased improvement has not been observed in the student, the parent will be notified by phone, or in person, of the student’s performance in the Discovery Program. The teacher will state

ways in which he/she is working to help the student with his/her deficiencies, and will also recommend ways the parents may help their child. The teacher will also explain the student's role in improving deficient areas.

- C. If, after two weeks time from the phone contact with parents, the student has not shown a satisfactory improvement in his/her performance on Discovery activities, the teacher will inform the building principal. The building principal will set up a formal conference with the student, parents, Discovery teacher, and program coordinator. The building principal will preside over the meeting. The Discovery teacher will show, in writing, areas of deficiency in performance or products. The teacher will also show dates indicating when the student and parents were first informed of the deficiencies. All people attending the conference may give input into ways the deficiencies can be improved. At the conclusion of the conference, the student and his/her parents will be informed, in writing, of needed improvements in the student's performance or products if he/she is to remain in the program.
 - D. If, following the formal conference, the student does not show a satisfactory improvement in the deficient areas, the Discovery teacher will notify the building principal. The building principal and Discovery teacher will make a decision on the exiting of the student.
3. The building principal and Discovery teacher will make final decisions on recommendations for exiting students from the Discovery Program due to inappropriate or disruptive behavior.

Discipline procedures for Discovery students will be the same as regular students, as outlined in the Gunter I.S.D. handbook.

When a student is exited from the Discovery Program, a formal letter of dismissal should be signed by the student's parent or legal guardian. A copy of the letter will be placed in the student's folder.

Transfer Procedures

Transfer students who have been identified as gifted by their previous school district will be placed in the district's Discovery Program for the remainder of the current school year. The district shall assess the student during the next annual screening period using the district's established identification criteria. The placement committee shall determine if continued placement in the district's program for gifted and talented students is appropriate.

Appeal Process

Parents whose children were in the screening pool but not selected will be furnished reasons for non-selection by the building principal and/or member of selection committee upon request.

If the parent wishes to appeal the selection decision, he/she will file a written appeal stating reasons why the data gathered during screening does not give an accurate account of the child's performance and ability.

The building principal and the parent will then confer discussing the data gathered, the selection process, and the child's performance and the reasons for the demands of the program. If the parent and the principal determine it is in the best interest of the child to continue the appeal process, a second appeal conference will be held with the Discovery Committee to further discuss and assess the child's needs, strengths, and potential benefit or frustration from the program.

If the committee, building principal and parent determine it is in the best interest of the child to be considered further, either a placement will be made or a six-weeks period of observation will take place. During that time teachers, Discovery teachers, and the principal will monitor both the students' behavior and class work. If the child exhibits a need for the program, he/she will be placed in the Discovery Program. If they do not, the child will be reconsidered during the spring screening if his/her test scores or nominations place him/her in the screening pool.

If the person making the appeal wishes to appeal the decision of the committee following the above procedures, the person must follow the district's local policies governing appeals.

Student Accountability

Students in the K-6 program will receive a teacher performance report every 12 weeks. The report will be in a rubric format. It will not be reported or recorded on the 6 weeks student report card. The report allows parents to see how their student is performing and provides an opportunity for the Discovery teacher to communicate expectations and performance of Discovery students.

Professional Development

Each teacher assigned to deliver instruction in the four core subjects to GT students will complete a minimum of 30 hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted and talented students, assessing student needs and curriculum and instruction for gifted students within the first semester of the assignment. Additionally, they will receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education. Professional development may include visits to model programs during release time. Credited hours will be determined by the district Gifted and Talented coordinator.

Administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions will have a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education. New employee orientation will include an overview of the district's program for gifted and talented students.

Professional development will be evaluated annually and results of this evaluation will be used in the development of a written plan for professional development. The plan can include in-services based on a teacher's level or knowledge of teaching GT students.

These professional development opportunities in the area of gifted and talented education will be provided and information will be disseminated throughout the year to all staff.

A long range plan for professional development that advances our GT curriculum as well as the teacher's knowledge in GT education will be developed.

Curriculum and Instruction

GT-identified students will be assured an array of appropriately challenging learning experiences which may include:

- Guided/independent research
- Advanced-level products and/or performances
- Career and leadership explorations
- Creative or artistic expressions
- Advanced problem solving

Student progress is periodically assessed either through the district grading measures or through a performance evaluation rubric developed by the GT committee.

Curriculum resources will include provisions for differentiated activities, materials and resources to extend and enrich the required curriculum.

Program Evaluation

Discovery teachers will meet on a regular basis to evaluate and make necessary changes in the program.

Parent, school board members, and Discovery teacher input will be considered when evaluating or changing the program. Parents of students participating in the Discovery Program will be provided an evaluation form to complete.

