

ROISD Gifted and Talented Program Handbook

ROISD Academic Office

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Program Goals and Descriptions Rationale

The Texas Legislature has mandated that each local school district shall design and implement a program to meet the needs of identified gifted and talented students in grades K-12 within its district. (Section 29 121, Texas Education Code).

Each child is a unique individual who deserves the opportunity and guidance to reach his or her maximum potential. With this strongly held belief, the Red Oak Independent School District acknowledges the special needs of the gifted and talented students in our district. These students deserve the necessary time and attention to spark their individuality and a continued love of learning. They must be supported and challenged in their intellectual efforts if they are to take their place as leaders in the twenty-first century.

Definition of Gifted and Talented Students

Texas Education Code defines “gifted and talented students” as 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.

State Goal adopted by the Texas State Board of Education

“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.”

ROISD Program Philosophy

Gifted and talented students require an academic program designed to facilitate their continued development from grades K-12. The learning experiences of these students should allow opportunities to explore their "giftedness" so that they may gain a better appreciation of themselves and others. Growth of interpersonal skills is necessary to the development of leadership ability. Exposure to a broad field of studies should provide for the enhancement of critical and creative thinking in each of the four core areas. This aligns with ROISD's District Improvement Plan which calls for the facilitation of higher level thinking skills.

ROISD GT Program Goals

To ensure that provisions for gifted and talented students are implemented equitably district-wide, ROISD has established the following program goals:

- Develop and implement an ongoing identification process of screening and selecting gifted and talented students in grades K-12; the process will occur through a selection committee and be based on qualitative and quantitative criteria.
- Ensure that all populations have equal opportunity for referral, screening, and selection into the Gifted and Talented Program through the use of multiple and diverse measures, including verbal and nonverbal evaluations.
- Develop and implement an effective program for the academically gifted and talented students in grades K -12.
- Develop and implement appropriately differentiated and gifted and talented K -12 curriculum options which are meaningfully linked to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).
- Provide ongoing and appropriate staff development to administrators, counselors, and teachers who are involved in meeting the needs of gifted and talented students.
- Develop and implement a design to evaluate the acceptability, effectiveness, and efficiency of the Gifted and Talented Program in grades K-12 by using relevant, data-based information in the areas of identification, curriculum, staff development, parent and community involvement, and program options.

Gifted and Talented Identification Procedures

The purpose of identifying students for the GT Program is not simply to label students as gifted, but to determine which students require alterations in their educational program due to their unique learning needs. In order to provide appropriately differentiated curriculum for this population of students, ROISD has adopted specific guidelines for identifying students for participation in the GT Program.

The identification and selection of students for participation in the program is determined by a three step process: (1) nomination/referral, (2) screening, and (3) selection. It is the responsibility of the campus GT teacher to make both staff members and parents aware of this process through written communication, staff or parent meetings, individual conferences, etc.

All kindergarten students are automatically considered for GT and other advanced level services through deliberate fall semester classroom observations and interactions with the campus GT specialist teacher.

Nomination/Referral

Students may be nominated/referred to the GT Program by any of the following persons:

- Parents
- Teachers who are familiar with the student's capabilities, performance potential, and/or past records
- Counselors
- Administrators
- Students may self-nominate
- Other persons who are familiar with the student's abilities, performance potential, and/or past records

Identification for the GT Program is an ongoing process: therefore, students may be referred at any time during the school year. Students begin each school year with a "clean slate". (For example, even if they were tested in the spring of the previous school year and did not qualify, students can be re-referred for the program in the fall.)

Nominations/referrals are submitted to the campus GT specialist teacher at the Elementary level and to the school Counselor at the Intermediate level and above. Requests must be made in writing and should be dated to ensure timely consideration.

Screening

Once referred, the student proceeds to screening. In this process, relevant data is collected which shows the student's ability to perform or the potential to perform at the level of accomplishment which might indicate a student's need to be placed in the G/T Program. In accordance with the *Texas State Plan for the Education of the Gifted and Talented*, ROISD incorporates multiple and diverse criteria in the screening process. These criteria include both quantitative (measured) and qualitative (descriptive) measures.

Upon nomination/referral, the campus will begin the screening process which may include:

- Request for completion of Parent Observation Checklist and Permission to Test forms
- Request for completion of Teacher Observation Checklist
- Collection of existing student data, which includes but is not limited to:
 - grades and/or classroom products
 - prior GT screening data
 - standardized assessment data
 - other observations or information from planned experiences
- Use of assessment tools to collect quantitative student data on aptitude and achievement

Selection

Decisions regarding placement of students in the GT Program are made by a GT Selection Committee. This committee is appointed at each campus, and includes at a minimum three district or campus educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted/talented students. To be considered “exemplary” in this area according to the Texas State Plan, the majority of committee members must have completed thirty (30) hours of training and are current with six-hour annual training updates. The committee meets and reviews individual student data throughout the year as needed following screening procedures. The committee may request the collection of additional data beyond the data collected during screening in order to make the most appropriate placement recommendation. Parents are notified by letter regarding the Selection Committee’s recommendation. Parent permission is required to begin services.

Transfer Students

Placement in the GT program is consistent throughout the district. Transfers from within the district are automatically placed in the program. Students new to the district and not in a GT program will be referred on the same basis as other students within the district and with the same identification procedures. Students new to the district who have been in a GT program in another district must meet Red Oak ISD identification criteria in order to be placed, which may vary from the criteria used in another school district. Assessment data from another district may be utilized if the test(s) administered are comparable to those used in ROISD for GT identification and if the data is less than two years old.

Furloughs

A furlough is defined as a leave of absence from program services. The District may place any student on furlough who is unable to maintain satisfactory performance or whose educational needs are not being met within the structure of the GT Program. A furlough may be initiated by the student, parent(s), teacher(s), counselor(s), or administrator(s). The intent of a furlough is for temporary reasons only. Furloughs may not be granted for more than one grading period unless there are serious extenuating circumstances, in which case the furlough application must be approved by the Deputy Superintendent. At the end of a furlough, the student may re-enter the program, be placed on another furlough, or be exited from the program.

Exiting the Program

Every effort is made to ensure that students are accurately evaluated and correctly placed in the GT Program. Once the student is placed in the GT Program, efforts are made to meet needs at his/her level of achievement. However, if it becomes evident that the program is no longer the appropriate placement for the student, exit procedures may be initiated by the student, parent(s), teacher(s), counselor(s), or administrator(s).

A request to exit the program must be made in writing to the campus GT Selection Committee stating the reasons for the request. The GT Selection Committee will review the request and the available student information. If the request was initiated by the parent or student, the Committee shall meet with the parent and student before considering the request. The Committee may determine that student progress should be monitored closely for a period of time, or possibly that the student should be placed on furlough. If the Committee determines that it is in the best interests of the student and his/her educational needs, the Committee may exit the student from the program.

Program Re-Entry

Students who exit the GT Program may re-enter the Program, but must re-qualify according to district criteria. Test scores must be current and may not be used if more than two years old. Campuses will follow the same procedures as for any student referred for the first time.

Appeals and/or Reassessment

A parent or student may appeal any final decision of the GT Selection Committee regarding selection for, furlough from, or exit from the GT Program. It is strongly advised that prior to appealing, a conference is held with campus staff to understand the reason(s) for the Committee decision, and/or to review the student's assessment results. The campus will not perform routine re-assessments.

If a parent/guardian believes there are valid reasons for reconsideration of a GT Selection Committee decision, he/she must submit a written letter stating the reasons for the request. This written request must be submitted no later than two weeks after receiving communication regarding the decision. Upon appeal, the GT Selection Committee will review the student's available data and make decisions about whether additional assessment or data collection is needed to re-evaluate the decision.

Description of GT Program Services

The Gifted and Talented Program provides differentiated curriculum opportunities including both enrichment and acceleration for students in grades K-12. Thinking strategies play an active role in GT classrooms, providing students with appropriate challenges and in-depth understanding. Students learn to work together as a group, to work with other students, and to work independently. Experiences in-school as well as out-of-school are available to students to encourage growth in areas of strength as well as the development of advanced-level products and performances.

Teacher Training Requirements

Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program for gifted students have a minimum of 30 hours of staff development including, but not limited to nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessing student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students. They also complete six hours annually of additional professional development in gifted education.

Program Organization

- Elementary Program: In addition to the homeroom classroom teachers meeting training requirements described above, GT students in grades 1-5 also take part in a pull-out program. They are served at least once per week by a GT specialist teacher who has had extensive training in all aspects of gifted education. Curriculum units used are interdisciplinary, based on broad themes, and incorporate higher level thinking strategies into the core content. GT teachers also work closely with regular classroom teachers so that, along with the pull-out program, gifted students may experience challenging learning opportunities in their regular classroom.
- Middle School Program: GT students in grades 6-8 may participate in Honors as well as GT-specific sections of certain subject areas, depending upon the student's unique needs and area(s) of giftedness. Honors courses are fast-paced and rigorous, and are designed to challenge students and accelerate through the curriculum in some cases. Interdisciplinary projects are incorporated into the student's learning and are facilitated through a specified content area teacher.
- High School Program: GT students in grades 9-12 have the opportunity to explore rigorous coursework through Honors, Advanced Placement (AP), or Dual Credit (DC) courses. In addition, students may choose to undertake an Independent Study course in an area of interest with mentorship and advising.

Texas Performance Standards Projects

The Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) is a resource for differentiated instruction developed by educator committees in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency. At each grade level, the TPSP provides guidelines for independent learning experiences and research projects that are adaptable and based upon the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in the foundation content areas. Red Oak ISD often utilizes these resources for challenging, individualized interdisciplinary projects that are tied to the grade-level foundation curriculum.

Parental Involvement

ROISD recognizes the importance of parental involvement and collaboration in the design and delivery of GT Program services. A district GT Advisory Committee (GTAC) is organized to provide parent/community support for the program, and also to provide input for program improvement. The GTAC is comprised of a variety of stakeholders, and may include parents, students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Meetings will be held twice per year with additional meetings as needed.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation of the ROISD GT Program will take place each year. ROISD staff and community members may provide input. GT-specific information from Student and Community Engagement surveys will also be used in the evaluation process.

Resources

Useful Websites:

[ROISD School Board Policy](#)

[Texas Education Agency Gifted and Talented Website](#)

[Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students Website](#) (scroll down the page)

[Texas Performance Standards Project Website](#)

[Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented Website](#)

[Duke Talent Identification Program Website](#)

[Northwestern University Center for Talent Development Website](#)

For Questions or Comments, please contact:

Campus GT Teacher

Campus Counselor

Campus Principal