

Lamesa ISD

***Gifted and Talented
Handbook***

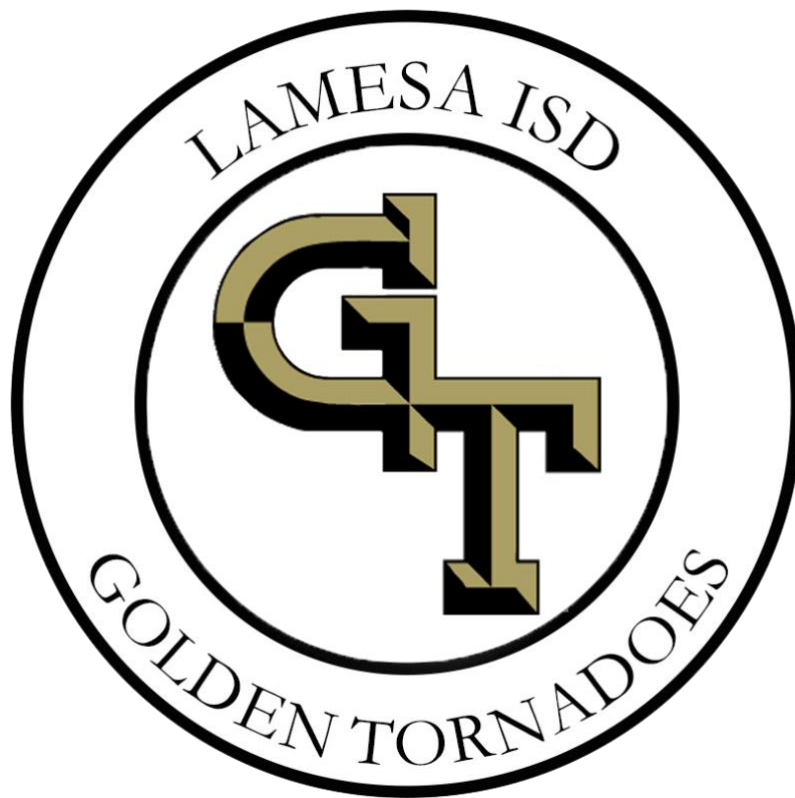


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Program Goals and Descriptions

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 Lamesa 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.”

Lamesa ISD 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 LISD's District Improvement Plan which calls for increasing personal growth measures for all students and increasing the percentage of students Meeting and Mastering state assessments (Goal 1, Performance objectives 2 & 3).

Lamesa ISD GT Program Goals

To ensure that provisions for gifted and talented students are implemented equitably districtwide, LISD 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, databased 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 G/T 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, LISD has adopted specific guidelines for identifying students for participation in the G/T 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 G/T coordinator to make both staff members and parents aware of this process through written communication, staff or parent meetings, individual conferences, etc.

Open nominations/referrals will be accepted during the fall semester beginning at a specified date in November, for students grade 1 – 12. The referral window will be open for kindergarten students in the spring semester. Students who are referred for G/T screening will be given the CogAT. **The Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)** is a multiple-choice K-12 assessment that measures reasoning skills with different types of verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal questions. A committee will meet to discuss quantitative and qualitative data collected to determine the eligibility of each referred student. G/T services, for all qualified students, will begin the semester following the referral and completed testing.

Nomination/Referral:

Students may be nominated/referred to the G/T 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
- Other persons who are familiar with the student's abilities, performance potential, and/or past records

Students begin each school year with a "clean slate". (For example, even if they were tested during 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 G/T coordinator.

Screening

Once referred, the student will be screened by district personnel. 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, LISD 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 (CogAT)

Selection

Decisions regarding placement of students in the G/T Program are made by a G/T Selection Committee. This committee is appointed by the district, 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 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 G/T 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 G//T 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 G/T program in another district must meet Lamesa 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 LISD for G/T 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 G/T 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 Director of Special Programs. 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 G/T Program. Once the student is placed in the G/T 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 G/T Coordinator stating the reasons for the request. The G/T Coordinator will review the request and the available student information. If the request was initiated by the parent or student, the campus G/T Coordinator will meet with the parent and student before considering the request. The campus G/T Coordinator 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 campus G/T Coordinator determines that it is in the best interests of the student and his/her educational needs, the campus G/T Coordinator may exit the student from the program.

Program Re-Entry

Students who exit the G/T 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 G/T Selection Committee or campus G/T Coordinator regarding selection for, furlough from, or exit from the G/T Program. It is strongly advised that prior to appealing, a conference is held with campus staff to understand the reason(s) for the decision, and/or to review the student's assessment results. The district will not perform routine re-assessments. If a parent/guardian believes there are valid reasons for reconsideration of a G/T 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 Director of Special Programs 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 G/T 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, G/T students in grades 1-5 also take part in a pull-out program. They are served at least once per week by a G/T 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. G/T 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:** G/T students in grades 6-8 may participate in G/T specific sections of certain subject areas, depending upon the student's unique needs and area(s) of giftedness. Many 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:** G/T students in grades 9-12 may participate in G/T specific sections of certain subject areas, depending upon the student's unique needs and area(s) of giftedness. Many 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. Dual credit courses, coordinated through Howard College, are also available.

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. Lamesa ISD often utilizes these resources for challenging, individualized interdisciplinary projects that are tied to the grade-level foundation curriculum.

Parental Involvement

Lamesa ISD recognizes the importance of parental involvement and collaboration in the design and delivery of G/T Program services. A district G/T Advisory Committee (G/TAC) is organized to provide parent/community support for the program, and also to provide input for program improvement. The G/TAC 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 Lamesa ISD G/T Program will take place each year. LISD staff and community members may provide input. G/T specific information from Student and Community Engagement surveys will also be used in the evaluation process.

For Questions or Comments, please contact:

Campus GT Coordinator
Campus Counselor
Campus Principal
Director of Special Programs