



# Gifted & Talented Program Handbook

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## **STATE DEFINITION**

“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.

Texas Education Code, Subchapter D, Sec. 29.121

## **STATE GOAL FOR SERVICES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS**

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.

## **RATIONALE FOR THE MVISD G/T PROGRAM**

Commitment to the future demands we foster and develop the abilities of gifted/talented youth. To deny such students opportunities is to deny excellence. Just as a sports coach works to strengthen and discipline the abilities of a superior young athlete, so must the classroom teacher strengthen and discipline the abilities of a superior student.

While gifted/talented students may master the basic skills more readily than other students at their grade level, without assistance or enriching experiences, these same students may become underachievers or behavior problems. In some cases, gifted students fail to develop their exceptional abilities because they lack the encouragement to do so.

Because of their exceptional abilities, gifted/talented students can progress far beyond the regular school curriculum. By providing experiences consistent with the abilities or potential of the gifted child, the education of all children will be improved. Director of the National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented, Irving S. Sato (March 1980), has explained the concept in this way:

“Although some educational needs of gifted students are being addressed in general education, certain needs unique to the gifted are being largely ignored. These distinctive educational needs make the gifted markedly different from students of other abilities. Any quality program for the gifted rests on a thorough understanding of these differences. As we modify the curriculum for the gifted in response to these differences, we actually upgrade education for all students since many practices for the gifted are in lesser degree appropriate and helpful for other pupils.”

If we are to have inventive problem solvers in the future, we must not fail now in educating appropriately those children and youth most likely to achieve excellence. Our obligation to the future requires a strengthened commitment to gifted/talented education today.

### **MVISD MISSION FOR GIFTED EDUCATION SERVICES**

Our mission is to provide an innovative & challenging learning environment that offers our highest achieving students the opportunity to grow academically and think critically & creatively about complex issues, as well as develop advanced products & performances in hopes that they will use their abilities to be leaders and valuable contributors to a diverse and competitive 21st-century society.

### **MVISD GOALS FOR GIFTED EDUCATION SERVICES**

- **Thinking skills** Gifted/talented students will develop their abilities at a higher level, more complex thinking skills (including critical, creative, and productive thinking) that are extensions of the regular curriculum.
- **Subject Matter Knowledge and Skills** Gifted/talented students will develop the skills necessary for self-directed learning and will conduct independent studies and collaborative research projects that extend the regular curriculum and result in advanced-level products.
- **Self-Concept and Leadership** Gifted/talented students will gain an understanding and respect for each person’s abilities, recognizing the likenesses and differences between themselves and others and will develop their own unique abilities for the betterment of both themselves and society.

## **MVISD GIFTED EDUCATION SERVICES**

The Medina Valley Gifted and Talented Program curriculum is designed to enhance the educational opportunities for students exhibiting exceptional academic abilities.

Instruction at the elementary level (grades K-5) is achieved through cluster grouping & differentiation in the regular classroom where teachers trained in G/T methodologies provide identified G/T students services in all core areas and through push-in or pull-out enrichment instruction with a G/T Specialist. All teachers within the Medina Valley ISD will receive 30 hours of G/T Foundational training and 6 hour annual updates.

Pull-out enrichment will focus on problem-based learning and will contain a main curricular component with an integrated technology piece. A vertically aligned scope and sequence of lessons will be developed to meet students' affective needs and build problem solving & leadership skills. Field trips, community involvement, and speakers will also be utilized to enhance curriculum. Scheduling of pull-out program activities will be coordinated at the campus level.

Students in grades 6-12 will be offered academically advanced courses designed to challenge gifted and/or motivated students to understand rigorous content in their specific area of giftedness: Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and/or Social Studies. Students may be selected for a single content area or may be selected for any combination of content areas. G/T students may also choose to participate in a variety of enrichment courses and activities (if available) including Texas Future Problem Solving Program, robotics, independent studies, and competitive academic teams.

Teachers of G/T students at all levels will utilize instructional accommodations in order to provide differentiation, such as, but not limited to:

- a) curriculum compacting to include pre-assessments in order to accelerate instruction in targeted areas;
- b) tiered assignments in order to ensure students are receiving accelerated instruction in targeted areas and on-level instruction in areas of need;
- c) flexible grouping to ensure students receive accelerated/differentiated instruction in gifted areas; and
- d) research and project based activities to enrich student learning and to conduct in depth study on units of instruction.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF G/T LEARNERS

Typical characteristics and behaviors exhibited by students who are academically gifted/talented in **general academic ability or specific subject ability** might include:

- intense, sustained interest
- keen 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 may not exhibit these behaviors in identical ways, or at the same time, or in all subject areas, but they will display many of these traits consistently.

Creativity may run as a thread through other areas of giftedness including the intellectual area and specific subject matter aptitude. Typical characteristics and behaviors exhibited by students who are gifted in the area of **creativity** include:

- unique applications/rich imagination
- extreme fluency of thoughts and ideas
- almost insatiable curiosity
- acceptance/tolerance of disorder
- contributor of new ideas and/or products
- challenger of existing ideas and/or products
- in depth foundational knowledge
- risk taker
- non-conformist
- delayed closure
- persistent
- task commitment
- sense of humor
- playful spirit

Leadership ability is defined as the talent to guide, direct, or influence others to follow a course of action or thought. Students who are gifted in general academic ability or specific subject matter areas may also display some of the following typical characteristics and behaviors in the area of **leadership**:

- well-organized
- self-confident
- persuasive communication skills
- respected by others
- recognized as a leader
- risk taker
- empathic
- empower others
- problem finder
- visionary

- adapts readily to new situations
- extremely responsible

- motivator
- cooperative attitude

### **IDENTIFICATION PROCESS**

Students in the Medina Valley Independent School District are identified as gifted and talented in general academic ability and/or specific content areas in accordance with the district's written board-approved definition of giftedness.

The identification process consists of four steps:

- 1) refer students for the program;
- 2) screening of students using appropriate instruments;
- 3) testing/collection of identification criteria; and
- 4) evaluation by the G/T Campus Selection Committee of each referred and screened student according to the established criteria to identify these students for whom placement in the gifted/talented program is the most appropriate educational setting.

State guidelines for identification require students be identified for the program based upon criteria to include both qualitative and quantitative measures. Assessment tools may include, but are not limited to, the following: achievement tests, intelligence tests, creativity tests, behavioral checklists completed by teachers and parents, student/parent conferences, and available student work products.

### **CAMPUS SELECTION COMMITTEE**

The principal on each campus will be responsible for organizing a Campus Selection Committee of at least three local educators (Board Policy EHBB Legal). It is recommended that this committee include at least one administrator (principal, assistant principal, academic coordinator, or counselor), the G/T specialist, and at least three classroom teachers from various grade levels. All committee members should have received a minimum of 6 clock hours training in the nature and needs of gifted students.

### **REFERRAL**

Through an open referral system, efforts will be made to secure a referral from any person familiar with a student's abilities. The district G/T Specialist(s) will work closely with campus administration to implement the process. The referral periods have been established as follows:

Kindergarten – Referrals in December, placement decision made before March 1st

1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade – Referrals in January, placement decision made before the end of school year  
6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade – Referrals in September, placement decisions made immediately

Kindergarten students must be identified and begin receiving services before March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, as per state law.

A student may be referred by one or more of the following: teacher, parent or guardian, student (self or peer), psychologist, counselor, librarian, administrator, or community member.

The principal, counselor, or a G/T Specialist shall communicate referral, screening, and identification procedures to faculty members. This communication may be completed through the distribution of appropriate materials such as agenda items for discussion at faculty meetings, one-on-one meetings with teachers, or through other means deemed appropriate by individual campuses.

Communication will also be made available to the parents/students regarding referral periods through the campus website and local news outlets (if available).

Efforts will be made to secure referrals of students from diverse backgrounds, including economically disadvantaged, those with special needs (twice-exceptional), and historically underrepresented groups. Examples of efforts to be made by the principal or designee may include individual conferences with parents or guardians of students, training of teachers and others in the methods of identifying gifted minority students, and use of community groups as vehicles for the communication of information about the program.

Referrals should be submitted to the G/T Specialist.

## **SCREENING**

MVISD will utilize an appropriate assessment at the elementary level to screen all students in one or more grade levels to increase the likelihood that potential gifted learners are identified.

## **ASSESSMENT/COMPILATION OF IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA**

One member of the Campus Selection Committee (usually the G/T Specialist) will be selected to administer necessary assessment instruments. A student profile will be compiled with identification criteria to facilitate decision-making for the selection of students whose

educational needs will be best met through participation in the G/T Program.

Parent/guardian permission must be obtained prior to administering any assessment instrument to the student. This will be done through a letter & form sent home with the student. Additionally, parents will be provided with program information. This information may be in the form of a brochure, informational literature, and/or parent meeting. Program and assessment information will be available in the parent/guardian's native language, when necessary.

Assessment instruments may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Achievement tests;
- 2) Cognitive ability tests;
- 3) Anecdotal information;
- 4) Teacher/Parent Checklist(s)

Approved instruments for use in the identification process are determined by the G/T District Advisory Committee. Selection of instruments for a specific student may be based on individual student needs and abilities. Instruments will be chosen with the goal of allowing students to display optimal performance.

The referral process will not discriminate against students with regard to race, creed, sex, or handicapping condition. Confidentiality will be assured regarding the rights of privacy of individual students' records in accordance with section FL of the Medina Valley ISD Board Policy Manual.

### **SELECTION PROCEDURES**

A Campus Selection Committee shall evaluate each referred student according to the established criteria and shall identify those students for whom gifted program placement is the most appropriate educational setting.

1. Although data collection and completion of the student profile may be completed by one member of the Campus Selection Committee, final selection of students shall be made by the full Campus Selection Committee, which will base its decision on the review of all student data collected.
2. No students, who are otherwise qualified, will be disqualified on the basis of grades, behavior, or other factors extraneous to student profile criteria. Students may, however,

be found unprepared to benefit from specific G/T instructional settings after identification (see See Guidelines for Furloughs and Exiting).

3. Notification of results will be sent home to parents after the Campus Selection Committee meets.
4. After the student is identified for G/T services, and parent permission to participate is obtained, the student is coded “G” Gifted in PEIMS.
5. Campus Selection Committee decisions are subject to review by the G/T District Advisory Committee and may be reversed or returned to a campus committee for reconsideration if procedural errors occur.

### **GUIDELINES FOR FURLOUGHS AND EXITING**

Students should be considered for furloughs/exiting from their assigned G/T program under the following conditions:

- (a) They have demonstrated over a substantial length of time (at least one semester) that they are not benefiting from the program; or
- (b) The student requests removal from the program; or
- (c) The student's parent(s) requests that the student be removed from the program.

Although grades are often an indication of high achievement, some students excel in their areas of giftedness despite receiving poor grades. For this reason, it is important to realize that grades are not always a good measure of true ability or potential.

Grades should not be the sole criterion used when considering whether or not a student is benefiting from G/T placement. Just as no single indicator is sufficient for program placement, no single method or instrument should be used to remove a student once identified as gifted from the program to which he/she has been assigned.

The following procedures will be followed on all campuses when considering exiting a student from a G/T placement:

1. The Campus Selection Committee (CSC) will serve as a review board for considering furlough/exiting of G/T students.
2. A parent/guardian will be invited to participate in the review meeting.
3. The CSC will determine whether or not the student being considered is benefiting from his/her present placement.
4. A consensus of the CSC members is required to furlough/exit an identified student from the G/T program.

5. At the time of the meeting, the committee will complete and sign the “Furlough Determination” form. The committee must indicate on the form if the student should be retested if she/he wishes to reenter the G/T program at a later date.
6. In case of a lack of parental disagreement or if a staff member disagrees with the campus decision, the appeals process may be employed by either school staff or parents. See Appeals Process section of handbook for details.
7. A student or parent may request a furlough, due to extenuating circumstances, for up to one year, and if granted, may reenter the program without retesting. At the end of the furlough, the student's progress shall be reviewed and the student may re-enter the gifted program, be removed from the program, or be placed on another furlough. If furlough is requested by the student, the parent/guardian will be notified prior to any decisions.
8. Gifted coding in PEIMS is removed for all furloughed or exited students.

The purpose of furloughing G/T students from a specific placement and reentering them in a more appropriate placement at a later time is the same; to provide the learning experiences which are most appropriate to their interests and abilities.

## **ADMISSION POLICIES FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS**

### **Interdistrict Transfers**

1. Transfer students who bring records of G/T identification with sufficient assessment data will be placed into their campus’ G/T setting for the remainder of the year. This data does not need to match the Medina Valley ISD identification criteria exactly but should show evidence of cognitive testing and advanced achievement. Parent permission will be obtained prior to placement.
2. Students shall be formally assessed at the next annual testing/review period using the district’s established identification criteria.
3. As with all students, the G/T Specialist will work with campus professionals to ensure that placement is the most appropriate setting for the student’s educational needs.
4. Transfer students who do not have complete, qualifying G/T records must be tested at the next regular referred opportunity before being placed in the G/T program.
5. Students who are new to the district and have not been in a G/T program (as determined by records or phone/email communication with the previous district) may be referred and tested at the next regular testing period.

## **Intradistrict Transfers**

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.

## **APPEALS PROCESS REGARDING PROGRAM PLACEMENT**

A parent or student may appeal any final decision of the Campus Selection Committee regarding selection for, furlough, or exit from the gifted program.

The following procedures are to be used by all parents, staff, or community members requesting a review of Campus Selection Committee decisions:

1. The person initiating the appeal will submit a written request for review to the campus principal or G/T Specialist.
2. The Campus Selection Committee will meet to review. Parent/student will be included if possible. If resolution occurs then no need to continue to the next step.
3. The G/T District Advisory Committee will meet to consider appeals and the decision of the committee will be communicated in writing to the person making the appeal within 10 working days after the meeting.
4. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with Board policy FNG(LOCAL) beginning at Level Two.

## **MVISD G/T DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The G/T District Advisory Committee exists for the purpose of determining how to improve the G/T program in Medina Valley ISD and serves in four primary capacities:

- Selects instruments used for identification
- Performs annual review of program effectiveness
- Establishes program procedures
- Hears appeals

It selects the instruments used in the identification process in accordance with the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students and best practices in gifted education.

Additionally, the committee will annually review the effectiveness of the program, and the results of the evaluation shall be used to modify and update the program. Parents and community members should be included in the evaluation process at regular intervals. Information shall be shared with Board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, students in the gifted and talented program, and the community.

The G/T District Advisory Committee also reviews and establishes all procedures associated with the gifted and talented program, reviews/prepares the G/T Program Handbook, and hears appeals not resolved at the campus level.

Members of the MVISD G/T District Advisory Committee include:

1. Curriculum Director
2. Campus Principal or designee(s) for each campus (including primary & secondary campuses)
3. G/T Specialists