Definition of Gifted

The following definition is provided by the Texas Education Agency in their guidelines for gifted and talented programs.

Gifted and talented student means a child or a 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 exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area; possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or excels in a specific academic field.
Characteristics of the Gifted

A gifted and talented child…

1. May have unusually advanced vocabulary for age or grade level; uses terms in a meaningful way; has verbal fluency.

2. May possess a large storehouse of information about a variety of topics (beyond the usual interests of youngsters his age).

3. May have quick mastery and recall of factual information; may be easily bored with routine tasks.

4. May have rapid insight into cause-effect relationships; often tries to discover the how and why of things; may ask provocative questions (as distinct from informational or factual questions); may want to know what makes things (or people) “tick”.

5. May have a ready grasp of underlying principles and can quickly make valid generalizations and look for similarities in events, people, and things.

6. May be a keen and alert observer; usually sees more than others in a story or film.

7. May read a great deal on his own; usually prefers adult-level books; does not avoid difficult material; may show a preference for factual material.

8. May try to understand complicated material by separating it into its respective parts; reasons out things for himself; sees logical and common answers.

9. May become absorbed and involved in certain topics or problems; may be persistent in seeking task completion.

10. May strive toward perfection; is often self-critical; is often not easily satisfied with his own speed or products.

11. Often prefers to work independently; requires little direction from teachers.

12. May be interested in “adult” problems, such as religion, politics, sex, and race, more so than others of his age level.

13. May like to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations.

14. Is often quite concerned with right and wrong, good and bad; often evaluates and passes judgment on events, people and things.

15. May display a great deal of curiosity about many things, asking a variety of original or complex questions.
Gifted and Talented Education
Burleson ISD
Why Identify Gifted Children At All?

Improving education for everyone is the goal for which we all strive; however, while we are doing that we must also make sure the needs of these underserved children are met. Remember, brain researchers tell us we must use and challenge our brain or we will lose ability. Unless specially planned, school experiences seldom challenge bright students. Identifying children with special needs is the only way to ensure that these needs will be met. Gifted children are among that special needs group that must be identified and served.

Barbara Clark, 1988

Texas Education Guidelines for Gifted and Talented Programs

STATE GOAL FOR SERVICES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

Students 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 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 students will have produced products and performances of professional quality as part of their program services.

As Texas Public Schools enter the 21st century, professional educators are setting goals reflecting the highest possible expectations for all children in the state. The philosophy of the State Board of Education relating to curriculum, as stated in Chapter 75.1 of the Texas Administrative Code, reads, “Public elementary and secondary education is responsible for providing each student with the development of personal knowledge, skill and competence to maximum capacity (The Agency, 1988R, 3).” Districts must develop their educational programs to ensure that appropriate curriculum and learning opportunities are in alignment with the needs, interests, and abilities of all students.

In 1990-91, the Texas Legislature mandated that every district have provisions for gifted students in grades kindergarten through twelve (Section 21.652, Texas Education Code). “The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students” (2000) presents guidelines designed to assist districts in developing, implementing, and maintaining effective services for gifted students, leaving the specific design of such programs to be determined by the local district. Burleson ISD is committed to adherence to the state’s guidelines and to further promoting excellence in its gifted program. Providing all students with the opportunity to reach their maximum potential is the common goal of the State of Texas and of Burleson ISD.
Gifted and Talented in Burleson ISD

As a result of the 1991 Texas Mandate for the establishment of gifted and talented programs, Burleson ISD made a commitment to utilize the Texas Education Agency’s Guidelines for Gifted and Talented Programs and adapt them to specific needs within the district. Burleson’s Gifted and Talented program began to provide information, training, and student services that would nurture and develop gifted potential.

The Gifted and Talented program in Burleson encompasses a diversity of services that are designed to meet the needs of all gifted students. Though varied in student audience and methodology, these services are connected by common goals and outcomes.

Program Philosophy

Gifted students need a flexible, varied program of experiences designed to maximize student learning and thinking at individual rates. Learning experiences will be differentiated by content, process, and products while addressing the specific affective needs of the gifted learner grades kindergarten through twelve.

The district will strive to:

- Encourage growth at varying levels of abilities, interests, and needs
- Develop within the student a desire for excellence and a sense of individual responsibility to the school, community and a changing society
- Provide the gifted student with various forums for exploring, discussing, and evaluating the nature and needs of gifted individuals
- Expose the student to potentially lifelong intellectual pursuits
- Provide time, resources and support to explore performance tasks at a deeper level with real-life application.

SOAR Program (Students Off and Running)
K-2 Students

Students in kindergarten through second grade are served in Students Off and Running (SOAR). All students will be a part of a gifted/talented pool, and all teachers will be certified to teach gifted and talented children. Students identified as potentially gifted may be provided with instruction and learning experiences in a pull-out setting. All K-2 students will receive instruction designed to enhance talent and will include but not be limited to lessons in divergent thinking, deductive reasoning, and metacognition. Specific scheduling and program design may vary from campus to campus. Teachers will use observation and lesson products to help identify potentially GT students.

The Elementary Gifted and Talented Program
Grades 3-5

The TAG (Talented and Gifted) Program in Burleson serves identified students in grades three through five. A gifted specialist shared between two campuses works with the gifted
students and their teachers to provide enrichment and academic acceleration as needed. Identified students are clustered in a regular classroom with a teacher who is certified to work with gifted students. In addition to serving as a resource for the classroom teachers, the Gifted Specialist meets with TAG students one day a week on the gifted curriculum. The curriculum includes complex thinking techniques, extensions on grade-level TEKS, and the introduction of above-level TEKS.

TAG students will not be required to complete make-up work from the classroom that is missed while in the pull-out program (unless it is part of an on-going project). However, they are responsible for the knowledge. If time missed on TAG days is preventing a TAG student from keeping up with the knowledge and skills (not assignments) required by the grade level curriculum, the classroom teacher, GT teacher, and parents should discuss the possible need of a furlough from GT services.

Secondary Gifted and Talented Program in Burleson
Grades 6-12

Identified gifted and talented students are served in their areas of strength in the AP and Pre-AP classes in the four core academic content areas. The AP and Pre-AP teachers have received the 30-hour Gifted and Talented training and offer a continuum of learning experiences that lead to the development of advanced-level performances and products. At the middle school level, specific GT classes for E/LA are offered. When possible, in-school and out-of-school options, relevant to the student’s area of strength, are available.

Guidelines for Gifted and Talented Education
Burleson ISD

The Identification Process

While the Gifted and Talented Education Program recognizes and encourages creativity and leadership, the program is centered around general intellectual ability and subject-specific ability. Every effort is made to encourage the development of creative and leadership gifts while enhancing academic achievement.

The identification process includes three stages: Nomination, Testing, and Placement. It is the goal of Burleson ISD that no group or category of student be overlooked in the identification process.

Referral

Any member of the Burleson community may refer a student for testing during the month of January. Referrals are solicited via newspaper releases, school print publications, parent letters, and school web publications. Referrals often come from a variety of sources, such as principals, parents, teachers, librarians, counselors and community members. Students may also refer each other or themselves. Referrals for GT testing will be accepted during the
month of January. The deadline for submitting referral forms by teachers, parents, or others will be the last Friday in January. Referral paperwork should be submitted to the designated GT specialist or contact on your campus.

**Testing**

Written parental consent shall be obtained before any special testing or individual assessment is conducted and shall be an educational record.

Burleson ISD takes a holistic approach towards testing. Multiple criteria are scored for each student nominated for the Gifted and Talented Program. These criteria include both qualitative and quantitative measures and include cognitive ability tests, achievement tests, academic subtests, tests in creativity and teacher nomination scales. Testing provisions assure the fair assessment of students with special needs.

**Placement**

Final decision for program placement is made by a committee at the campus level. The committee is composed of the district’s G/T coordinator, the campus TAG Specialist, a campus administrator, the school counselor, and a classroom teacher with at least 30 hours of G/T training. These members must be knowledgeable of the needs and potential of gifted and talented students and familiar with the state guidelines for gifted and talented programs.

During the placement meeting, each student’s scoring matrix is considered and discussed anonymously. The committee recommends placement only for students whose data reflect that the Gifted and Talented Program is the most appropriate educational setting for them. This is determined by a “preponderance of evidence” of the criterion considered on the Burleson ISD scoring matrix.

Depending on individual needs, a student may be simultaneously served in more than one special program. For example, a student may be simultaneously served in the gifted program and in the special education program. Appropriate placement is the goal of the committee with the welfare of the student at the heart of every decision.

Participation in the TAG Program requires written permission of the parents or legal guardians. Notification of the committee’s decision will take place when all campus committees have met and are ready to remit notification letters. Parents will receive notification by mail the first week after the last day of school.

Students not placed into the program may be re-referred the following year; however, students will not be retested. This allows for further observation and increased student maturity and acumen. Additionally, frequently-administered cognitive testing would be invalid.

In addition to testing and placement of students into the program, the committee is charged with the review and monitoring of the progress of Gifted and Talented students. These actions allow the committee to deal with possible errors in identification, transfer of students, and removal of students from the program.
Appeals Process

Parents or students may appeal any final decision of the selection committee regarding selection for or removal from the gifted program. Appeal shall be made first to the selection committee. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with FNG in local BISD Policy beginning at Level Two.

Furloughs/Probation

Students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the structure of the gifted and talented program may be placed on furlough/probation by the selection committee. The purpose of such a furlough/probation is to provide the student an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the selection committee. A furlough/probation also may be granted for scheduling reasons and at the request of the student and/or parent.

A student may be placed on furlough/probation for a period of time deemed appropriate by the selection committee, usually no more than one year from the furloughed date. At the end of the furlough/probation, the student’s progress shall be reassessed, and the student may re-enter the gifted program or be removed from the program.

Placement of Transfer Students

When a student identified as gifted by a previous school district transfers into Burleson ISD, the student’s records shall be reviewed by the selection committee to determine if placement in the District’s program for gifted and talented students is appropriate.

The committee shall make its determination within six weeks of the student’s enrollment in the District and shall base its decision on the transferred records, comparable test scores, observation reports of District teachers who instruct the student, and student and parent conferences. In the event that the student’s scores from the previous district do not meet BISD’s criteria, the student will be given the opportunity to be evaluated within six weeks.

Exit Provisions

Student performance in the program shall be monitored. A student shall be removed from the program at any time the selection committee 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.