Huntsville Independent School District
Gifted & Talented/Advanced Academics Program Handbook
Dear parents,

This handbook is intended to provide parents with an overview of Huntsville Independent School District’s Advanced Academics/GT Program and services for gifted and talented students. This document is designed to answer many of your questions and help you understand the policies and procedures our district employs to meet the needs of our gifted and talented students. In addition to your student’s classroom teachers, counselors in each school will help answer your questions or concerns about services. Each school has a staff member who can assist you with the identification process or obtaining appropriate instructional modifications to meet your student’s unique rate and level of learning. The staff contacts are listed by school building:

**2021-2022 School Year**

Stewart Elementary      Amber McDuffie, 936-435-6709, asmcduffie@huntsville-isd.org
Samuel W. Houston Elementary Kelli Vossler, 936-435-6753, kvossler@huntsville-isd.org
Scott Johnson Elementary   Tiffany Matchett, 936-435-6253, tsmatchett@huntsville-isd.org
Huntsville Elementary      Emily Craft, 936-435-6860, ekcraft@huntsville-isd.org
Huntsville Intermediate    Melody Saladiner, 5th grade, 936-435-6504 mcsaladiner@huntsville-isd.org
                            Guillermo Jimenez, 6th grade, 936-435-6506, gxiimenez@huntsville.org
Mance Park Middle School   Deanna Jamison, 7th grade, 936-435-6406, dsjamison@huntsville-isd.org
                            Elizabeth Matchett, 8th grade, 936-435-6407, ematchett@huntsville-isd.org
Huntsville High School     Grades 9-12
                            Danielle Williams, 435-6208 dlwilliams@huntsville-isd.org
                            Sarah McNeel, 936-435-6109, sbmcneel@huntsville-isd.org
                            Amber Bradford, 936-435-6180, anbradford@huntsville-isd.org
                            Jennifer Quirino, 435-6108 jquirino@huntsville-isd.org
                            Marsha Stringer, 435-6207 mstringer@huntsville-isd.org
                            Dawn Shaw, Room 2112, 936-435-6181, dshaw@huntsville-isd.org

Huntsville ISD is committed to providing instruction to meet the individual needs of all our students and to provide the services needed to help our gifted and talented students achieve their academic potential. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. My office is located in the Hawkins Administration Building and I can be reached at 936-435-6338. Please note that this information is available electronically on the Huntsville ISD website at www.huntsville-isd.org.

Sincerely,

Ana Thomas
Bilingual/ESL & GT Coordinator
athomas@huntsville-isd.org
# HUNTSVILLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
## ADVANCED ACADEMICS PROGRAM HANDBOOK

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CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Identified students will participate in challenging learning experiences in kindergarten through grade twelve in language arts, mathematics, science and social studies based on Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills standards. Focus will be on creative thinking, critical thinking and analysis, research and advanced-level products and/or performances. Students will have opportunities to interact with regular students and to work with gifted students. Opportunities will be provided to accelerate in areas of student strengths. The school district will inform parent of available opportunities.

Talent Pool (K-2)

Trained teachers will deliver differentiated assignments to Talent Pool students through clustering. The curriculum will be comprised of interdisciplinary units, which include English language arts, social studies, mathematics and science. Content will be open-ended and problem-solving based.

Elementary Program (Grades 3-4)

The curriculum will be enriched in two blocks: language arts/social studies and mathematics/science. Differentiated lessons should develop productive, complex, abstract and higher level thinking skills in identified students. Differentiated curriculum will be student-centered and open-ended and will produce divergent and critical thinking skills.

Intermediate Program (Grades 5-6)

5th Grade
The curriculum will be taught in each core curricular area of language arts, social studies, mathematics and science. Differentiated lessons should develop productive, complex, abstract and higher level thinking skills in identified students. Differentiated curriculum will be student-centered and open-ended and will produce divergent and critical thinking skills.

6th Grade
The curriculum will be taught through Pre-AP courses in the four core curricular area of language arts, social studies, mathematics and science.

Secondary Program (Grades 7-12)

Curriculum will be based on the College Board Advanced Placement (AP) Program that provides access to high quality education, accelerates learning, rewards achievement, and enhances both high school and college programs. Qualified students will choose subject specific courses. The curriculum will be taught in both Pre-AP and AP courses where students learn a subject in depth, develop analytical reasoning skills, and form disciplined study habits.
**KINDERGARTEN IDENTIFICATION TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES**

**October**
All kindergarten students will receive a form requesting permission for administration of the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test.

**November**
All kindergarten students who return the permission slips are to be administered the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT).

**December**
NNAT results will be screened by a committee of personnel trained in the nature and needs of gifted students. Students scoring in the 73rd percentile rank or higher on the NNAT will complete Phase II testing. Parents of students who do not meet this score on the screener have the right to appeal and request additional screening.

**January**
Phase II testing will include the CogAT assessment. Classroom teachers will complete the intellectual ability, academic, and creativity subsections of the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES) on each student who enters Phase II. The screening committee will meet to review individual student matrices. Students must meet the district’s criteria in three of the four criteria.

**February**
Notification letters will be sent to parents prior to March 1. Students will be served weekly during the spring semester beginning the week of March 1 by a kindergarten teacher or other designee, who has completed 30 hours of state required GT training.

**FIRST GRADE IDENTIFICATION TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES**

**January**
Students in first grade who are not currently being served in the Developmental Talent Pool may be referred for screening. Teachers, parents or peers will complete the district referral form during the referral window.

**Spring**
Students will be administered the CogAT assessment. Classroom teachers will complete the intellectual ability, academic, and creativity subsections of the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES).

**June**
The screening committee will meet to look over individual student matrices. Students must meet the district’s criteria in three of the four criteria.

**June**
Notification letters will be sent to parents. Students who qualify for the Gifted/Talented program will begin receiving services the following school year.
SECOND THROUGH SIXTH GRADE IDENTIFICATION TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES

Students not currently being served in the gifted and talented program may be referred for screening by teachers, parents or peers. Testing will occur during the spring semester.

January
Teachers, parents or peers will complete the district referral form during the referral window.

Spring
The school counselor will administer the CogAT and IOWA assessments. Classroom teachers will complete the intellectual ability, academic, and creativity subsections of the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES). Students may qualify in the areas of mathematics/science and/or language arts/social studies.

June
The screening committee will meet to review individual student matrices. Students qualifying for the gifted/talented program must meet the district’s criteria in three of the four criteria.

July
Notification letters will be sent to parents. Students who qualify for the Gifted/Talented program will begin receiving services the following school year.

SEVENTH THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE IDENTIFICATION TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES

Teacher, parent and peer referrals will also be accepted for seventh through twelfth grade students not currently identified for the GT/Advanced Academics Program.

January
Teachers, parents or peers will complete the district referral form during the referral window.

Spring
The school counselor will administer the CogAT and IOWA assessments. Classroom teachers will complete the intellectual ability, academic, and creativity subsections of the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES). Students may qualify in the areas of mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies.

June
The screening committee will meet to review individual student matrices. Students qualifying for the gifted/talented program must meet the district’s criteria in three of the four criteria.

June
Notification letters will be sent to parents. Students who qualify for the Gifted/Talented program will begin receiving services the following school year.
Appeals

Students who do not qualify under the screening procedure may appeal in writing to the District Appeals Committee for reconsideration. All appeals must adhere to established guidelines and timeframes. This written appeal must state reasons why the student and or parents feel reconsideration is merited. This committee will review testing information and additional data presented. All decisions of the Appeals Committee are final.

The District Appeals Committee may place a student in the program for a nine-week probationary period. At the end of this nine-week probationary period the teacher, the school counselor and the Director for Accountability and Assessment will review the student’s progress in the class and determine final placement in the program.

Exit Process

Student performance in the Advanced Academics Program will be monitored to assure that the student is being successful in the program. At any time, the parents of an identified student, the student who is in grades 6 through 12, or appropriate campus personnel may request a review of the student’s placement.

Every effort will be made to continue the placement of a student in the program. A student may be removed from the program at any time the District Placement Committee determines it to be in the student’s best interest.

A student who is exited from the program may not re-enter until one full academic semester has elapsed. Students who exit the program and later decide to re-enter will be considered new students to the program and must again meet the selection criteria at the next regular screening period.

Furlough

Students who wish to be withdrawn for a temporary period of one year may request furlough status. They or their parents should present to the District Placement Committee the reasons for wishing to be furloughed and their educational plans for the intervening period. The committee may grant limited extension of a furlough, if the student and/or parents present appropriate documentation. A student who does not re-enter the program at the end of the furlough period of one academic year is exited and may re-enter at a later date through the standard identification process.
**REASSESSMENT**

Students may be referred by their classroom teacher for reassessment if they have not previously qualified for placement in the Talent Pool, Enhanced Elementary Program or the Advanced Academics Program. The HISD Office of Accountability and Assessment considers all testing data current for two calendar years. Students will be reassessed on a biannual basis. Parents may appeal to the assessment office for their child to be screened before the end of the two-year time period.

All Talent Pool students will be reassessed at the end of their second grade year for placement in the Enhanced Elementary Program. Students in the Enhanced Elementary Program will be grandfathered into the Advanced Academics Program at the end of their sixth grade year.

**NEW STUDENTS**

New students to the district who were not previously identified as gifted and talented in their former school district will be screened upon request if they meet the Huntsville ISD’s criteria for testing. The percent passing on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) will be used if it available on the student. The average must be 90 percentile or higher in order for a student to be tested. If the STAAR average is not available on the student, the counselor and/or GT Coordinator will look at all records and determine if testing is appropriate.
STUDENT TRANSFERS

Parents of students who enroll with records reflecting that their child was a current participant in an Advanced Academics Program in another school district will be encouraged to set up a conference to discuss criteria for placement in the previous district. Campus personnel will provide information regarding the criteria for placement in the HISD program and post the following options:

1. Parents may request that their child be included in the talent pool or Advanced Academics Program.

   - If the parent requests that their child participate in the talent pool or Advanced Academics Program, student records will be reviewed by a designated district administrator. If the student meets prerequisites of the program, the student may be placed in appropriate classes for a probationary period of nine weeks. At the end of the nine weeks, the classroom teacher and a school administrator will review the student’s progress and determine if the student should remain in the program.

   - If no transitional problems occur within the nine-week probationary period, the student will be designated as a talent pool or AAP/GT student in Huntsville ISD. Campus personnel should code the student appropriately on PEIMS and notify the Director for Accountability and Assessment of the student’s placement.

   - If a student has participated in advanced services in the previous school but does not have placement documentation from that institution (private school, out-of-state student, etc.), the student will be tested using instruments which HISD designates. The testing will be done within 30 days of enrollment. The student may be placed in the advanced classes pending the results of the testing.

2. Parents may request that their child be screened using the HISD criteria and will adhere to HISD established timelines.
Staff Development

Teachers who provide instruction and services to students in the GT Program must have a minimum of thirty hours of training that includes the nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessing student needs, and curriculum and instruction for identified students. In addition, teachers delivering instruction to students in the GT program must receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education.

Administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions must have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes the nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options.

In addition to required training for teachers and administrators, specialized staff development opportunities are encouraged and supported. Advanced Academics Program teachers participate in College Board institutes, vertical team institutes and other discipline-specific training opportunities to enhance course content and the delivery of instruction.

Family-Community Involvement

Parents and community members are encouraged to become partners in the Gifted & Talented/Advanced Academics Program (AAP). Parents will be informed of written policies and learning opportunities through dissemination of the Parent-Student Handbook. The GT/Talent Pool Parent Information Night program will also serve as a source of information about the program. Input from parents will be solicited and used in program evaluation.

Parents are encouraged to conference with the teachers throughout the year on the progress of their child (children). The development of individual student talent is enhanced through parental support.

Community members and business representatives are encouraged to work with the teachers in the AAP to develop mentorships.

Website

To access this information online, please go to the District Webpage at huntsville-isd.org, “Parents/Students,” and “Gifted & Talented/Advanced Academics.”