

Gifted and Talented Handbook

The Harmony School System



2009-2010

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW	3
STATE GOAL	3
MISSION STATEMENT	4
PROGRAM GOALS	4
OBJECTIVES	4
DEFINITION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED	5
THE THREE-RING CONCEPTION OF GIFTEDNESS	5
CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTEDNESS	7
BRIGHT CHILD vs. GIFTED LEARNER	8
PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS	9
PROGRAM COMPONENTS	10
ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS	11
IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION	14
1. Nomination	14
2. Assessment/Testing	14
3. Selection	15
4. Notification	15
5. Appeals	15
6. Important Dates for 2009-2010 School Year	15
FURLOUGH	16
RE-EVALUATION	16
EXITING THE PROGRAM	16
TRANSFER PROCEDURES	17
GRADE ACCELERATION	17

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEXAS STATE PLAN FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS

An Overview

Throughout the United States, there has been a call for America's students to master more complex skills and to demonstrate understanding of more sophisticated content. In response, states throughout the country have increased their expectations for student performance. However, while basic competencies are being raised, often there is little done to enhance services for more advanced learners. **National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent**, published by the United States Department of Education in 1993, notes that, "Most American students are encouraged to finish high school and earn good grades. But students are not asked to work hard or master a body of challenging knowledge or skills. The message society often sends to students is to aim for academic **adequacy**, not academic **excellence** (p.1)."

To assure that this trend is reversed in Texas, the State Board of Education has adopted numerous incentives that encourage districts to support services that go beyond the minimum and that meet the needs of gifted learners. In order to express its commitment to high level learning opportunities for all students, the Texas State Board of Education adopts the following as its goal for services for gifted learners.

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.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Harmony Schools are committed to implementing a program that meets the unique social, emotional, and intellectual needs of gifted and talented students through the collaboration of students, educators, parents and community members that ensures opportunities for maximum growth and development for life long success.

PROGRAM GOALS

Providing students with an accelerated program to meet specific needs in a selected academic curriculum is the primary goal of the Harmony Schools Gifted and Talented Program. Additionally, the program provides students with unique opportunities to develop individual talents and to strengthen skills. Emphasis on a positive self-concept, relationships with others, and strategies to develop critical thinking skills enables students to become independent, self-directed learners.

Goals are focused in three specific areas:

1. The gifted student will develop a realistic concept of self and work cooperatively with peers and adults.
2. The gifted student will develop the higher level thinking skills of knowledge comprehension, synthesis, application, analysis, and evaluation in order to solve problems.
3. The gifted student will create original projects that reflect critical thinking skills as supplemental learning to the regular classroom curriculum.

OBJECTIVES

Gifted/Talented students will

- Develop critical thinking skills in order to solve problems logically.
- Develop research skills and use information gathered to implement a group research project.
- Demonstrate the ability to use creative problem solving strategies.
- Recognize how change in and around their world affects their relationships.

DEFINITION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED

"... 'gifted and talented students' 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."

[Chapter 29, Subchapter D §29.121]

THE THREE-RING CONCEPTION OF GIFTEDNESS

Research on creative-productive people has consistently shown that although no single criterion can be used to determine giftedness, persons who have achieved recognition because of their unique accomplishments and creative contributions possess a relatively well-defined set of three interlocking clusters of traits. These clusters consist of above average, though not necessarily superior, ability, task commitment, and creativity (see Figure A). It is important to point out that no single cluster "makes giftedness." Rather, it is the interaction among the three clusters that research has shown to be the necessary ingredient for creative-productive accomplishment (Renzulli, 1978). This interaction is represented by the shaded portion of Figure A. It is also important to point out that each cluster plays an important role in contributing to the display of gifted behaviors. This point is emphasized because one of the major errors that continues to be made in identification procedures is to overemphasize superior abilities at the expense of the other two clusters of traits

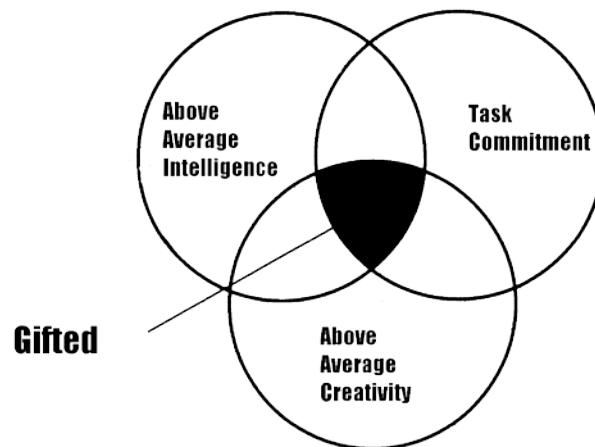


Figure A

1. Well Above Average Ability

Well above average ability can be defined in two ways:

- a. General ability
- b. Specific abilities.

a. General Ability

- High levels of abstract thinking, verbal and numerical reasoning, spatial relationships, memory and word fluency
- Adaptation to and the shaping of novel situations encountered in the external environment
- The automatization of information processing; rapid, accurate, and selective retrieval of information

b. Specific Abilities

- The application of various combination of the above general abilities to one or more specialized areas of knowledge or areas of human performance (e.g., the arts, leadership, administration)
- The capacity for acquiring and making appropriate use of advanced amounts of formal knowledge, technique, logistics, and strategy in the pursuit of particular problems or manifestation of specialized areas of performance
- The capacity to sort out relevant and irrelevant information associated with a particular problem or area of study or performance

2. Creativity

- Fluency, flexibility, and originality of thought
- Openness to experience; receptive to that which is new and different (even irrational) in the thoughts, actions, and products of oneself and others
- Curious, speculative, adventurous, and mentally playful; willing to take risks in thought and action, even to point of being uninhibited
- Sensitive to detail, aesthetic characteristics of ideas and things; willing to act upon and react to external stimulation and one's own ideas and feelings

3. Task Commitment

- The capacity for high levels of interest, enthusiasm, fascination, and involvement in a particular problem, area of study, or form of human expression
- The capacity for perseverance, endurance, determination, hard work, and dedicated practice
- The ability to identify significant problems within specialized areas; the ability to tune into major channels of communication and new development within given fields
- Setting high standards for one's work, maintaining an openness to self and external criticism, developing an aesthetic sense of taste, quality and excellence about one's own and work of others

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTEDNESS

General Intellectual Ability

- Comprehends abstract ideas and concepts
- Considers concepts and situations in which he/she has no personal experience
- Makes quick and valid generalizations and uses them in new situations
- Demonstrates skills in reasoning and evaluating situations
- Sees cause and effect
- Chooses and enjoys challenging tasks or problems
- Generates sophisticated and creative ideas and solutions
- Demonstrates great curiosity; asks how, why, and what if
- Chooses original methods and produces innovative products
- Is keenly observant

Social/Emotional/Behavioral

- Sense of Self
- Perfectionism Strong
- Ideas/Beliefs/Opinions
- Questions Authority
- Motivation for and Intense Focus on Tasks
- Withdrawal from Peers/Prefers Adults
- Subtle Sense of Humor/Original Jokes and Puns
- Boredom with Routine
- Sensitive to the Needs of Others
- Critical of Self and Others

Bright Child vs. Gifted Learner

(by Janice Szabos, **Challenge Magazine**)

A Bright Child

- Knows the answers
- Is interested
- Is attentive
- Has good ideas
- Works hard
- Answers the questions
- Top group
- Listens with interest
- Learns with ease
- 6-8 repetitions for mastery
- Understands ideas
- Enjoys peers
- Grasps the meaning
- Completes assignments
- Is receptive
- Copies accurately
- Enjoys school
- Absorbs information
- Technician
- Good memorizer
- Enjoys straight forward sequential presentation
- Is alert
- Is pleased with own learning

A Gifted Learner

- Asks the questions
- Is highly curious
- Is mentally and physically involved
- Has wild, silly ideas
- Plays around, yet tests well
- Discusses in detail, elaborates
- Beyond the group
- Shows strong feeling and opinions
- Already knows
- 1-2 repetitions for mastery
- Constructs abstractions
- Prefers adults
- Draws inferences
- Initiates projects
- Is intense
- Creates a new design
- Enjoys learning
- Manipulates information
- Inventor
- Good guesser
- Thrives on complexity
- Is keenly observant
- Is highly self-critical

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

The Harmony Schools Gifted and Talented Program will focus on two domains; general intellectual and specific academic. The specific academic areas of focus are Mathematics, Science, Language Arts, Social Studies, and Computer.

Students in GT Program in Harmony are offered the following services:

- The G/T program is available for students from grade K thru 12.
- Identified students are provided with options of taking Honors courses, GT courses, and Advanced Placement courses, where they have the opportunity to work with other GT students, non-identified students, and to work independently.
- Differentiated GT curriculum is taught in the academic core areas of English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The gifted curriculum will offer enriched and accelerated learning opportunities for the gifted learner. The curriculum will be differentiated in terms of content, process, and products. Students will be involved in inquiry based lessons, group problem-solving settings, independent investigations, and group discussions.
- ***Pull-Out Program*** Option is available in the academic core areas of Math and English/Language Arts. The Pull-Out Program design allows students to be grouped homogeneously with other gifted and talented students and participate in enriched academic experiences. The Pull-Out program is for students identified for receiving gifted specialist services in Math, Language Arts/Reading, Science, and/or Social Studies. Students meet for one or two periods every week to work on activities, labs, and projects outside the scope of the standard curriculum. Enrichment and extension of advanced concepts are explored through a project-based application. Students in the Pull-Out Program are required to complete all regular class activities and assignments that are due or were assigned on the day/period that they leave these classes to attend the Pull-Out Program.

GRADE LEVEL	PROGRAM COMPONENTS*
K-3	Math Pull-out sessions (1 period per week)
	Language Arts/Reading Pull-out sessions (1 period per week)
	Upper level reading books in Accelerated Reader (AR) Program
	Vocabulary and Literacy tests in AR will be mandatory for identified students (they are optional for others)
	Exploring materials that improve creative thinking skills (Groudworks, quizzes, etc.)
	Studying more advanced and challenging curriculum
	Opportunity to participate in Elementary-level academic competitions (see pg. 11-13)
	Enrichment activities in the classroom
4-8	Accelerated Math after school sessions (2 hours per week)
	Accelerated Language Arts/Reading after school sessions (2 hours per week)
	Upper level reading books in Accelerated Reader (AR) Program
	Vocabulary and Literacy tests in AR will be mandatory for identified students (they are optional for others)
	Exploring materials that improve creative thinking skills (Groudworks, quizzes, etc.)
	Studying more advanced and challenging curriculum
	Opportunity to participate in Middle school level academic competitions (see pg. 11-13)
	Enrichment activities in the classroom
	Participation in Advanced Writing Program (www.myaccess.com)
	Eligible to take Pre-AP and/or Honor courses
9-12	Graduation under Distinguished High School Plan
	Eligible to take Pre-AP, AP, and/or Honor courses
	Upper level reading books in Accelerated Reader (AR) Program
	Vocabulary and Literacy tests in AR will be mandatory for identified students (they are optional for others)
	Exploring materials that improve creative thinking skills (Groudworks, quizzes, etc.)
	Opportunity to participate in High school level academic competitions (see pg. 11-13)
	Enrichment activities in the classroom
	Participation in Advanced Writing Program (www.myaccess.com)
	Participation in G/T camps
	Opportunity to work on advanced science fair projects

*Services may vary campus to campus

ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS

1. *MathCounts (Grades 6-8)*

MATHCOUNTS is a national enrichment, club and competition program that promotes middle school mathematics achievement through grassroots involvement in every U.S. state and territory. MATHCOUNTS is one of the country's largest and most successful education partnerships involving volunteers, educators, industry sponsors and students. The MATHCOUNTS Competition Program provides the extra incentive and the perfect atmosphere for students to push themselves to achieve more in mathematics. Consisting of fun and creative problems, the MATHCOUNTS competitions have written and oral rounds, as well as individual and team components. Though challenging and non-routine, the competition problems focus on the 6th through 8th grade standards of the National Council of Teachers in Mathematics.



2. *Science Olympiad (Grades 6-12)*

Science Olympiad is an international non-profit organization devoted to improving the quality of science education, increasing student interest in science and providing recognition for outstanding achievement in science education by both students and teachers. These goals are accomplished through classroom activities, research, training workshops and the encouragement of intramural, district, regional, state and national tournaments. Science Olympiad tournaments are rigorous academic interscholastic competitions that consist of a series of team events, which students prepare for during the year. These challenging and motivational events are well balanced between the various science disciplines of biology, earth science, chemistry, physics and technology. There is also a balance between events requiring knowledge of science concepts, process skills and science applications.



3. *Odyssey of the Mind (Grades K-12)*

Odyssey of the Mind is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Team members apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics. They then bring their solutions to competition on the local, state, and World level. Thousands of teams from throughout the U.S. and from about 25 other countries participate in the program.

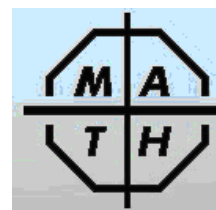


4. Science and Engineering Fairs (Grades 4-12)

The Science Fair offers an opportunity to display meritorious scientific talent through exhibits and to generate the interest of the public in the scientific abilities of students and teachers. Participants will compete within their schools, regions and the State. In addition, they will have an opportunity to participate in International Science Fair organizations such as International Sustainable World Energy-Engineering-Environment Project Olympiad (I-SWEEEP) and Intel Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF).

5. The Math League (Grades 4-12)

The Math League is dedicated to bringing challenging mathematics materials to students. League specialties include math contests, books, and computer software designed to stimulate interest and confidence in mathematics for students from the 4th grade through high school. Over 1 million students participate in Math League contests each year. Contest questions are designed to cover a range of mathematical knowledge for each grade level. Questions on the contests never require any mathematics beyond the grade level tested. They're fun too!



6. Spelling Bee (Grades K-8)

Our purpose is to help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabularies, learn concepts, and develop correct English usage that will help them all their lives. In general terms, the program is open to students who have neither turned 16 nor passed beyond the eighth grade, and who attend schools that officially enrolled with our program for the current academic year.



7. Academic Pentathlon (Grades 6-8)

Middle school (sixth, seventh and eighth grade) students can compete in the Academic Pentathlon program. This program was founded in 1984 to encourage and reward academic excellence through the motivation of competitive challenge. Teams are comprised of nine students like the decathlon team. The difference is that instead of ten events, the students compete in only five events: Math, Science, Social Studies, Language Arts (essay), and the Super Quiz, a public event covering a specific topic of study.



8. UIL Academics

The University Interscholastic League offers the most comprehensive literary and academic competitive program in the nation. It offers more than any other UIL division in terms of activities, with 22 high school and 18 elementary and junior high contests. More than a half million students participate in UIL academic contests. These activities, which exist to complement the academic curriculum, are designed to motivate students as they acquire higher levels of knowledge, to challenge students to confront issues of importance, and to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of specific skills.



9. American Mathematics Competition (AMC) (Grades 6-12)

The American Mathematics Competitions (AMC) is dedicated to the goal of strengthening the mathematical capabilities of our nation's youth. We believe that one way to meet this goal is to identify, recognize and reward excellence in mathematics through a series of national contests called the:



- American Mathematics Contest 8 (AMC 8),
- American Mathematics Contest 10 (AMC 10),
- American Mathematics Contest 12 (AMC 12),
- American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME), and
- United States of America Mathematical Olympiad (USAMO).

In addition to the 5 contests listed above, we also have a summer program, at which we choose the final six contestants for an international competition:

- Mathematical Olympiad Summer program (MOSP), and the
- International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO)

For over 50 years many excellent exams have been prepared by individuals throughout our mathematical community in the hope that all secondary students will have an opportunity to participate in these problem solving and enriching mathematics experiences. The AMC contests are intended for everyone from the average student at a typical school who enjoys mathematics to the very best student at the most special school.

IDENTIFICATION & SELECTION

The identification process, conducted in Harmony schools, consists of three steps:

1. Nomination
2. Assessment/Testing
3. Selection

1. Nomination

Students may be nominated by

- Parent(s),
- Teacher(s),
- Peers,
- Other Professional Personnel,
- And/or themselves

Nomination forms must be completed by the individual who nominates the child; however parents must give consent that the student be tested and evaluated. Parent Nomination Forms and Teacher/Professional Nomination Forms, available in the front office, are filled out by parents, teachers, peers, etc. and submitted to Gifted and Talented Identification committee.

Nominations can be made at any time during the school year, however, any testing and identification will be completed according to the Harmony assessment and identification schedule.

Written parental permission is required before screening/testing begins. No student may be denied access to Gifted and Talented Programs on the basis of race, creed, or handicapping conditions.

2. Assessment/Testing

Students seeking admission to Harmony Schools G/T Program are assessed as described below:

- i. **Ability Tests** consist of two parts:

Part I: To measure cognitive abilities through verbal and quantitative skills

Part II: To measure non-verbal abilities in reasoning and problem solving using spatial symbols

- ii. **Achievement Tests** are used to determine student academic level in the academic core areas of English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

Testing may take place during the school hours, after-school, and/or weekend.

3. Selection

Selection is based on the following:

- o The student's ability and achievement test scores
- o Nomination forms
- o Report card grades
- o AR and STAR reports
- o Teacher observations
- o Previous G/T enrolment

The G/T Committee convenes and uses both Quantitative and Qualitative data when making selection decisions

4. Notification

Parents are notified in writing of the G/T Committee's decision.

5. Appeals

Appeals to the decisions of Harmony G/T Committee may be made within 7 days of the notification of placement or non-placement in the G/T program. Appeals must be made in writing by presenting additional information to the committee not previously seen by the committee. The Harmony G/T Committee decisions are final.

6. Important Dates for 2009-2010 School Year

CALENDAR		
	FALL 2009	SPRING 2010
Testing Window	<i>Nov 23-Dec 4, 2009</i>	<i>Apr 27-May 7, 2010</i>
G/T Committee Meetings	<i>Dec 7-8, 2009</i>	<i>May 10-11, 2010</i>
Parent Notification Letters Sent	<i>Dec 9, 2009</i>	<i>May 12, 2010</i>
Placement Appeals	<i>Dec 11-18, 2009</i>	<i>May 14-21, 2010</i>

Dates subject to change

FURLOUGH

At times a student may seek a furlough or have such a "time-out" recommended for many reasons: emotional trauma, family considerations, health issues etc.

The G/T Committee, the parent(s), and the student may agree to grant the student a furlough, by executing a Furlough Contract, for a period not to exceed one year. During the period of the contracted furlough, the G/T Facilitator or designee shall monitor the student's academic status and periodically report to the G/T Committee. At the end of the time period stated in the Contract, the student may be considered for readmission to the G/T Program conditional upon the decision of the G/T Committee.

If a student does not return for readmission to the G/T Program at the end of the furlough period, the student will be exited from the program. The exited student may apply for admission to the G/T Program again at any time in the future, at which time the application will be processed following standard screening and placement procedures.

RE-EVALUATION

All students who are identified as gifted and talented should be re-tested for no longer than two years.

During the current school year, if the program appears to no longer meet the needs of the student, a re-evaluation may be requested.

EXITING THE PROGRAM

Occasionally, there may be students who are identified for the G/T Program who do not perform at expected standards in the program.

Before a student is exited from the program, the student's teacher(s), and/or school administrator will talk with the student's parent and explain the procedural safeguards to request a review of the decision to exit the student.

The following guidelines specify when a student may be exited from the G/T program:

- Repeated failure to complete work assigned.
- Substantial difficulty in understanding work that other students do independently (without parental or tutorial assistance).
- Consistent pattern of low grades (C's, D's or F's) over 6 weeks.
- Behavioral concerns, distractions, etc.

If a teacher or parent requests a student be exited, the student may not re-enter the G/T program during that school year. The student may not return to the program the following school year without re-testing.

TRANSFER PROCEDURES

Students transferring into Harmony may be placed in the G/T Program with appropriate information of previous G/T placement in the sending district. Without appropriate documentation, and/or upon recommendations from the receiving teacher or counselor, the incoming student may be screened for the G/T Program off-schedule using the standard procedures and measurements. Harmony reserves the right to administer its own measures if there is any question concerning the appropriate measures or other information received.

GRADE ACCELERATION

If a teacher or parent recommends grade acceleration for a child who outperforms his/her peers in class, then the G/T coordinator and parent meet to discuss the student's case. The G/T coordinator collects data from the student's teachers and if there is agreement that the student will socially and academically succeed, then the student is scheduled for a state-accredited grade acceleration test (Exam for Acceleration).

Tests are ordered in four core areas: Math, English/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies. The student is expected to score 90 and above in those subject areas.

More information about grade acceleration and study guides for tests can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/ce/k16/cbe-ea/about/>