

Milano Independent School District

Gifted and Talented Program



Policies and Regulations Handbook

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Background Information on Gifted and Talented in Texas

According to Section 29.123 of the Texas Education Code, the [Texas State Plan](#) forms the basis of GT services and accountability. The plan offers an outline for services without prohibitive regulation. Districts are accountable for services as described in the “in compliance” column of the State Plan where performance measures are included for five aspects of GT service design. These standards reflect actions required in state law and/or SBOE rule.

In 1999, the 76th Texas Legislature introduced Rider 69, which spurred the initial development and ongoing refinement of the Texas Performance Standards Project for Gifted/Talented Students (TPSP) as a vehicle through which districts might address the state goal. With the TPSP and ongoing research to inform and improve practice, Texas educators are committed to meeting the unique needs of GT students and to expanding the ways to do so.

State Goal and Definition of a Gifted/Talented Student

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.

Section 29.121

In this subchapter, “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

Milano ISD Plan for Gifted/Talented Students

The mission of the Milano ISD GT program is to enhance individual strengths of students to be responsible and productive citizens. Within our GT program, we are committed to realizing Milano ISD’s vision of inspiring, encouraging, and empowering our children to achieve excellence. We measure the success of our program through parent and student surveys, teacher reports on individual student growth, and the State Plan for the Gifted.

Milano ISD Goals for Gifted/Talented Services

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 are advanced in relation to students of similar age, experience, or environment and that reflect individuality and creativity. The following are Milano ISD's goals for the Gifted/Talented program:

1. Identification - Identify students in grades K-12 who demonstrate an academic need for gifted services using the criteria established by the district, approved by the board, and in compliance with the state mandates.
2. Self-Directed Learners - Develop the student's capacities to become self-directed and to be confident in their ability to research and process information and to create and communicate their findings as they produce and present advanced-level products.
3. Complex Thinking Skills - Enhance and refine the abstract and complex thinking and reasoning of these students through more sophisticated creative and critical thinking activities as they reflect and refine their own thinking processes.
4. Appropriate Instructional Strategies - Provide students with multiple opportunities to participate in learning experiences using advanced content (within the four core areas) which are defensibly differentiated in depth, complexity and pacing through modification to content and/or process and/or product. Students will be able to work independently, with groups of other gifted students, and with groups of non-gifted peers.

Provision of Student Services

Milano ISD offers a variety of learning experiences and opportunities for Gifted/Talented students in grades K-12 which meet the mandates of the Texas Administrative Code. These services include, but are not limited to, integrating Depth and Complexity into the curriculum, requiring advanced level products and performances, and allowing identified Gifted/Talented students the opportunity to work with other identified students. Below is how each campus provides services for Gifted/Talented students:

GT students will be provided targeted, differentiated lessons and activities that promote students' independence and creativity for academic student success. High school students will have the opportunity to be served in PreAP, Honors, AP, and Dual Credit classes.

Texas Administrative Code §89.3. Student Services

School districts shall provide an array of learning opportunities for gifted/talented students in kindergarten through Grade 12 and shall inform parents of the opportunities. Options must include:

- (1) Instructional and organizational patterns that enable identified students to work together as a group, to work with other students, and to work independently;
- (2) A continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced level products and performances;
- (3) In school and, when possible, out-of-school options relevant to the student's area of strength that are available during the entire school year; and
- (4) Opportunities to accelerate in areas of strength.

A continuum of learning experiences will be provided in the Gifted/Talented services which lead to the development of advanced level products and/or performances. Such services will include use of depth and complexity elements, differentiation of content, process and/or product in the regular or PreAP/AP classroom, a pullout program, participation in regional Gifted/Talented student seminars, independent studies, participation in the Texas Performance Standards Project, concurrent or dual enrollment classes, and other services as deemed appropriate for the student. Varied services are available in all four core academic areas including Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies. Identified students will work independently, with other identified students, and with students of other abilities.

Documentation of services will be maintained and parents will be notified of in-school and out-of-school options during the school year that are relevant to the needs of the gifted and talented students.

Assessment and Identification

Milano ISD has board approval on the identification procedures and processes of students K-12 for the services of the Gifted/Talented Program. These procedures meet state requirements (§29.121 & TAC 89.1) and have been designed to ensure the identification of any student who demonstrates educational need for the services of the program under the established guidelines.

Texas Administrative Code §89.1: Student Assessment.

School districts shall develop written policies on student identification that are approved by the local board of trustees and disseminated to parents. The policies must:

- (1) Include provisions for ongoing screening and selection of students who perform, or show potential for performing, at remarkably high levels of accomplishment in the areas defined in the Texas Education Code, §29.121;
- (2) Include assessment measures collected from multiple sources according to each area defined in the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students;
- (3) Include data and procedures designed to ensure that students from all populations in the district have access to the assessment process and, if identified as having significant educational need for advanced academics, services for the gifted/talented program;
- (4) Provide for final qualification of students (through a blind process) to be made by a

committee of at least three local district educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students; and

(5) Include provisions regarding furloughs, reassessment, exiting of students from program services, transfer students, and appeals of district decisions regarding program placement.

Referral process

Parents, guardians, teachers, other certified staff members, and community members may refer students who they believe exhibit the characteristics of giftedness. Referrals should be made by an individual familiar with the student's abilities. Referral forms are available in English and Spanish on the district website during the referral window. Written parent or guardian permission is required to screen/assess a student. If a parent/guardian does not want his/her child to be screened, this information will be documented.

Kindergarten Testing

All kindergarten students will automatically be tested for potential admission in the Gifted/Talented program before March 1st of each school year. Kindergarten students will be screened using the NNAT3.

Screening/Assessment Process

A student profile is used to identify those students who perform, or show the potential for performing, at remarkably high levels of accomplishment relative to their age, peers, experience, or environment.

1.5.3C At the kindergarten level, as many criteria as possible, and at least three (3), are used to assess students who perform at remarkably high levels of accomplishment relative to age peers.

- Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (2009)

1.5.4C In grades 1-12, qualitative and quantitative data are collected through three (3) or more measures and used to determine whether or not a student qualifies for gifted/talented services.

- Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (2009)

These instruments may include:

- School Abilities Test Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT) or second edition (NNAT3), Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students, 2nd edition (SAGES-2), Cognitive Abilities Test - Form 6 (CogAT), or other school abilities tests as deemed appropriate for the student;
- Academic Achievement Test - STAAR Scores, Local Benchmarking Data, or other school abilities tests as deemed appropriate for the student;

- Teacher Rating Scales such as the Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scales (GATES), the RenzulliHartman Teacher Rating Scales, or other rating scales as deemed appropriate for the student;
- Parent Rating Scales such as the Parent Questionnaire, or other rating scales as deemed appropriate for the student;
- Student interview; and/or
- Student product/portfolio.

Students with special needs will receive their documented accommodations throughout the testing process. Linguistically diverse students are assessed in the language they understand or with non-verbal assessment measures.

Identification and Placement Committees

The testing profile, once complete, will indicate a student's strengths and weaknesses, and help the Identification and Placement Committee to determine whether or not the data indicates an educational need for Gifted and Talented services. The decision for qualification to receive Gifted and Talented services is based on the Committee's observations about whether or not a preponderance of evidence exists indicating an educational need for services.

The Identification and Placement Committee will consist of (at a minimum) three district and/or campus educators who have been trained in the nature and needs of gifted learners. The committee is responsible for final decisions regarding the identification and placement of students into the Gifted and Talented Program. As the Committee evaluate the data, there are three placement options:

- 1) The preponderance of evidence indicates that the student exhibits an educational need for Gifted and Talented services, and would benefit from the services offered through the program.
- 2) The preponderance of evidence does not indicate that a student has an educational need for Gifted and Talented Services, and would best be served through the general education curriculum.
- 3) Additional data and/or observation is required in order to make a placement decision.

Once the assessment and identification process is complete, parents and/or guardians will be notified of the Committee's decision in writing within 10 working days. Parents and/or guardians of all students may request a conference with the Special Programs Coordinator to examine their child's assessment results. Requests should be made in writing.

Appeals

Parents/guardians, staff, and/or students may appeal the placement decision of the Identification and Placement Committee by submitting a written request within ten (10) working days of

receiving the Committee's written notification of qualification. The request must include reasons for the appeal, and must be submitted to the Special Programs Coordinator. Upon receipt of the request, the committee will reconvene in order to consider the need for further assessment data or other information.

Transfers

All students who have participated in gifted and talented programs prior to coming to Milano ISD will be considered for the Gifted/Talented Program. Once screening records are received from the student's previous district, the records will be examined for compliance to Milano ISD's criteria. If the transfer data is insufficient, Milano ISD will assess the student to see if placement in the program is in the student's best interest. A decision will be made regarding qualification within 30 school days of the receipt of the student's Gifted/Talented assessment results from the previous district.

Changes in Placement

Once a student is identified as exhibiting an educational need for Gifted and Talented Program services, that student remains identified for those services unless program performance based on program goals is not satisfactory, or if the student, parent, or teacher, requests a furlough (leave of absence) or to be exited from the program. A campus-level committee (to include the parent, GT trained teacher, GT trained counselor, GT trained administrator, and student, when appropriate) will make any necessary decisions for a change in a placed student's status.

Furlough

A furlough is a temporary leave of absence from receiving services through the Gifted and Talented Program for a very specific reason and for a very specific period of time, without being exited completely. A furlough is intended to help students who need a temporary break from the program in order to be successful. An identified student, parent/guardian, teacher, counselor, or school administrator, may request a furlough if all indications support the probability that the student will be able to successfully resume activities at a later date. Reasons a furlough may be granted could include (but are not limited to):

- increased demand on time caused by scheduling conflicts and/or outside obligations
- concern about emotional stress (that could stem from the student, the school, the home environment, etc.)
- extenuating circumstances preventing the student from participating for a short amount of time
- family concerns, serious illness, or any other circumstance which would inhibit or curtail the student's performance in the program

A furlough is not to be used as a disciplinary tool and should be granted without adding undue

pressure to the student. A furlough may not exceed one academic year. The furlough may also be used prior to a formal exit from the program for those students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the learning opportunities of the Gifted/Talented program. A furlough might also provide the student an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the Gifted/Talented committee. If a student elects to exit the program at the conclusion of the furlough, exit procedures should be followed.

Exit Procedures

Student performance in the program shall be monitored. Students may be exited from the program based on multiple criteria, including student performance in the program based on program goals. A student may be considered for exit if it is in his/her best interest and/or if program services do not seem to be the most appropriate educational placement for the student. State guidelines specify that no single criterion may be used to determine whether or not a student may exit the program. Documentation from multiple sources must be provided to support any teacher request for a student to exit from services. After communication with parents, teachers and the student, the campus committee makes the final decision concerning exiting the program. If a parent requests his child be removed from the program, the Gifted/Talented committee shall grant the request. Once a student is exited from the program he/she must adhere to the identification procedures and exhibit educational need to be readmitted. Students must meet requirements to remain in the Gifted/Talented Program.

Teacher Expectations

Milano Independent School District is committed to providing its staff with appropriate and meaningful professional development which enables the staff to meet the unique and individual educational needs of all students including services for gifted/talented students. It is important that all staff who are responsible for formally servicing these students obtain appropriate training for educating the gifted child. The district will require at least the minimum hours of training as mandated by the state:

Texas Administrative Code §89.2. Professional Development

(1) Prior to assignment in the program, 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 that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessing student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students;

(2) Teachers without training required in paragraph (1) of this section who provide instruction and services that are part of the gifted/talented program must complete the 30 hour training requirement within one semester;

(3) Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program for gifted students receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education; and

(4) Administrators and the Director of Student Services who have authority for program decisions are required to attend a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes the nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options.

Professional Development

Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program for gifted students will fulfill the following professional development requirements:

- Obtain their 30-hour foundational training within the first semester of placement in a class with gifted students.
 - This 30-hour foundational training will include
 - 6 hours of Nature and Needs of Gifted Students
 - 6 hours of Identification and Assessment of the Gifted
 - 18 hours of Curriculum and Instruction for Gifted Students
- Obtain 6-hours of annual professional development in gifted education within the first semester of placement in a class with gifted students.

District Counselor Expectations

The district counselor plays a vital role in ensuring that the social and emotional needs of gifted students are met. While gifted students are more intellectually advanced than their peers they may not be as advanced socially or emotionally - this is referred to as asynchronous

development. The district counselor will be available to work with students who may be struggling with asynchronous development.

Administrator Expectations

Administrators at each campus who may be responsible for program decisions are required to have a minimum of six hours of professional development in the education of gifted students. It must include:

- Nature and Needs of Gifted Students
- Program Options

Additionally, administrators will be involved in the Gifted and Talented Program in the following ways:

- Attend campus orientations and information meetings
- Monitor the service of students, via:
 - Teacher observations
 - Classroom performance
 - Local and state assessment results
 - Teacher evaluations
 - Student products
- Monitor teacher gifted and talented professional development hours completed each year (30 hour initial and 6 hour updates)

Evaluation of Program

Using a variety of data collection methods, Milano ISD will annually evaluate the Gifted/Talented program with input from all stakeholders including students, parents/guardians, and teachers. The evaluation data will be disseminated to school officials and will be used in conjunction with a needs assessment to be addressed in the district/campus improvement plans.

Resources

- Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students - https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/GT_State_Plan_2019_1.pdf
- Texas Performance Standards Project - (www.texaspsp.org)
- Depth and Complexity Framework - <https://www.jtayloreducation.com/>
- Texas Gifted Education Family Network - <https://giftededucationfamilynetwork.org/>