

Standards for Vanguard (G/T) Programs

Texas State Law for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students mandates that all school districts provide program services for their gifted and talented students with the following state goal.

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.

The Advanced Academics Department in the Houston Independent School District has the primary responsibility of overseeing, supporting, and monitoring (in collaboration with other departments and regional office and school-based staff) the programs for gifted and talented (G/T) students district-wide. Administrative procedures/guidelines that support and extend the Vanguard (G/T) Program standards are included in the district's Elementary and Secondary Guidelines. It is important to note that in HISD, the term "Vanguard" is used synonymously with "gifted and talented (G/T)". Generally, G/T is used when referring to a student who is identified as gifted and talented through pre-established identification procedures and criteria; the term "**Vanguard**" refers to the program to which G/T students are assigned.

The following standards for HISD Vanguard (G/T) programs have been established in accordance with the components of the Texas State Law for the Gifted and the state goal for gifted students and are designed to ensure equity in access for all students and to maintain consistency and integrity in program implementation. It is expected that all HISD schools will adhere to these standards.

Standards:

- #1 Program Design
- #2 Assessment
- #3 Identification of G/T Students
- #4 Admissions
- #5 Instructional Delivery Models
- #6 Curriculum and Instruction
- #7 Monitoring Program Implementation-Quality-Rigor
- #8 Student Success (Expectations)
- #9 Professional Development for Administrators
- #10 Professional Development for G/T Teachers
- #11 Data Quality and Compliance
- #12 Parent/Community Communication and Involvement
- #13 Evaluation
- #14 District Commitment and Support

Standard 1 – Program Design

The Vanguard (G/T) Program K-12, is a state-mandated, district-wide program providing G/T services to identified G/T students. Each HISD campus shall offer the Vanguard (G/T) Program through ONE of the following program designs:

- **Vanguard Neighborhood—for zoned and non-zoned (transfer) students**

The Vanguard Neighborhood program is a G/T program which operates in all schools, except those that are pre-designated as Vanguard Magnet schools. It is designed to provide G/T services on a campus, for all G/T students who are zoned to that campus and for any non-zoned G/T student on a valid transfer (other than Vanguard Magnet transfers). There are no enrollment quotas or qualification distinctions (tiers) in the admission process. All G/T students on the campus are served in G/T classes with appropriately trained/qualified teachers.

- **Vanguard Magnet—for zoned and non-zoned (Magnet transfer) students**

The Vanguard Magnet program is a G/T program which operates in pre-selected Magnet schools in accordance with the district Vanguard (G/T) standards as well as the district Magnet standards, which are centered on the principle of parent choice. With few exceptions, schools with Vanguard Magnet programs also offer classes/services for other non-G/T students such as regular/LEP/Sp. Ed. etc. However, **the G/T services at these campuses are one and the same for all G/T eligible students, regardless of whether they are zoned or non-zoned/transfer students.** The entire G/T program at Vanguard Magnet schools shall be designated as Vanguard Magnet, eliminating the duality of G/T programs which may have existed on some campuses. Eliminating the duality of programs will require mixing zoned and non-zoned G/T identified students when assigning them to classes.

All Vanguard Magnet schools (with the exception of schools that operate under the “Separate and Unique School – SUS” Magnet program) shall operate a “School Wide Program” (SWP) type of Magnet program (formerly known as “Add-On Program”). The Magnet specialty in Vanguard Magnet schools is the Vanguard (G/T) focus. As a SWP, all zoned students shall apply for the Vanguard (G/T) Magnet program and proceed with the necessary assessment if needed. All zoned students will be served in Vanguard (G/T) Magnet program and will not be part of the transfer enrollment goal for that campus. Non-zoned students must also apply and proceed with the necessary assessment if needed. Those who qualify as G/T may be admitted so long as there is space available. Only non-zoned/transfer students will participate in the Vanguard Magnet admission lotteries when there are more qualified applicants than spaces.

Enrollment goals for Vanguard Magnet schools shall be in accordance with the Magnet program standards as they relate to School-Wide Programs (SWP).

Standard 2 – Assessment

State law §29.121 requires that every district identify its G/T students and provide G/T services. In HISD, the process for identification as G/T involves a thorough review of a student's current measures of achievement and non-verbal ability, applicable obstacles, teacher recommendation, and grades. All assessments are administered during pre-established testing schedules/timelines by specially trained HISD staff at the student's school; students applying to Vanguard (G/T) Magnet programs are assessed at the school to which they are applying. Students who are applying for Kindergarten in the Vanguard Magnet program are assessed in centralized locations.

Each school shall ensure that all students currently enrolled in HISD are given the opportunity to be assessed for G/T eligibility

- a. upon initial application to the Vanguard (G/T) Program for entry at any grade
- b. during Nov.-Jan. of their Kindergarten year (as part of district's universal screening effort)
- c. prior to entry into the 6th grade (as part of the district's universal screening effort)
- d. during district-wide testing windows for new (first year) immigrant LEP students who have no prior test scores available...this testing is done in their home language

NOTE: Students must re-qualify as G/T prior to entering 6th grade; middle school students carry their eligibility into high school.

All students not currently enrolled in HISD, but who reside in HISD, shall be given the opportunity to be assessed for G/T identification upon applying for Vanguard (G/T) Magnet programs for entry at any grade. Trained staff at the Vanguard Magnet school to which the student applied shall conduct assessments by appointment on pre-established dates/times/locations following receipt of the Vanguard Magnet application and prior to consideration of acceptance/denial. Students who are identified as G/T as entering Kindergarten students shall carry their eligibility through the elementary grades regardless of which school they attend; students who are identified in middle school carry their eligibility through the high school years.

All students not currently enrolled in HISD, who reside outside HISD, shall follow the established Magnet and/or Vanguard Magnet application process and assessment timelines.

Assessments from outside sources shall not be permitted unless assessments are verified by the Advanced Academics Department for validity/authenticity.

Standard 3 – Identification of G/T Students

The identification process involves a review of the student's data (i.e. assessments, recommendations, grades, and added obstacle points when applicable) by the G/T Admission Committee, determination of eligibility based on the G/T Identification Matrix, parent notification of qualification or non-qualification, placement in G/T classes, and documentation of eligibility on the district's Student Information System (SIS) system.

Each school shall establish a **G/T Admission Committee** whose primary purpose is to identify G/T students in accordance with district guidelines. In schools with Vanguard (G/T) Magnet programs, the school-based G/T Admission Committee and staff from the Advanced Academics Department will collaboratively review all Vanguard (G/T) Magnet applicants prior to the district date for notification of Magnet acceptance/denial.

The G/T identification of a student can be initiated in 4 ways:

- 1) parent nomination that leads to a Vanguard (G/T) application
- 2) teacher nomination that leads to parent completion of a Vanguard (G/T) application
- 3) student self-nomination that leads to parent completion of a Vanguard (G/T) application
- 4) district-generated rosters of G/T eligible students (Kindergarten and 6th grade)

Parents wishing their child to be considered for G/T identification shall complete a Vanguard (G/T) application and submit it to their current school or Vanguard (G/T) Magnet school of choice. In each case, the school's G/T Coordinator processes the application for necessary assessments, completes the G/T Identification Matrix and prepares documents for review by the G/T Admission Committee. The G/T Admission Committee reviews and verifies the information on the G/T Identification Matrix, completes the necessary documentation, processes for SIS coding, officially notifies the parent of qualification or non-qualification for G/T services, and places the student in a class with a G/T qualified teacher.

Upon establishment of the district-generated rosters for grades K and 6th, qualifying students will be automatically identified as G/T and their parents will have the option of approving or opting out of the G/T services.

An **appeals process** is in place, in accordance with the state law, wherein parents and teachers may appeal a student's non-qualifying identification by bringing forth new data (test scores or grades) that, as a result of the "appeals" may qualify the student as G/T.

Standard 4 – Admissions

Students are admitted into the Vanguard (G/T) program only after they have qualified using the district's G/T Identification Matrix. All students who actually enroll in a Vanguard (G/T) program are required to complete an **Entrance Agreement** which stipulates the expected commitment for the student, parent, and teacher.

Admission procedures vary somewhat in Vanguard Neighborhood and Vanguard Magnet programs.

- **Vanguard Neighborhood—for zoned and non-zoned (transfer) students**

- In the Vanguard Neighborhood program, there are no enrollment quotas or qualification distinctions (**tiers**) in the admission process. All G/T students on the campus are served in G/T classes with appropriately trained/qualified teachers.

- Entering Kindergarten students who qualify as G/T during the “four year old testing” for Vanguard (G/T) Magnet Admissions (and did not receive a space in the lottery or did not accept a space in a Vanguard Magnet program) shall maintain their G/T qualification and be designated and coded in PEIMS as G/T when they enter Kindergarten, either on their zoned campus or in any other Magnet program.

- **Vanguard Magnet— for zoned and non-zoned (transfer) students**

- Elementary and Middle Schools, with an attendance zone, that offer a Vanguard (G/T) Magnet program shall follow the School Wide Program (SWP) Magnet program Design model. The entire G/T program at these schools shall be designated as Vanguard Magnet.

- These schools shall follow the established Magnet (transfer) quotas.

For Zoned Students:

- Zoned students shall apply to that specific Vanguard Magnet program (and are not part of the transfer quota for the campus) and if qualified, served through the Vanguard Magnet program without going through Vanguard Magnet admission lotteries.

For Non-zoned/Magnet Transfer Students:

- When there are more qualified non-zoned/Magnet transfer applicants than Magnet transfer spaces, an admissions lottery is conducted centrally through the Advanced Academics Department in accordance with established Advanced Academics guidelines.

Until qualification distinctions (tiers) are phased out in 2008-2009, Vanguard (G/T) Magnet schools shall maintain the qualification distinctions (**tiers**) in the admission process. No program may fill more than 50% of their Magnet transfer spaces in the Vanguard (G/T) Magnet entry grades with Tier I students. A Tier I lottery will be held when more than 50% of the applicants qualify as Tier I.

- Until the sibling rule modification is phased in for 2008-2009, qualified **siblings** of enrolled (or wait listed students that are admitted from the wait list) students are given priority in that specific Vanguard Magnet program. Effective 2008-2009, qualified siblings will take up no more than 25% of the spaces in the Vanguard (G/T) Magnet entry grades. If there are more than 25% qualified siblings, there will be a lottery to determine which students will be enrolled. If the remaining qualified siblings are not drawn in the regular lottery, there will be a wait list sibling lottery for positions at the top of the wait list, followed by a wait list lottery for remaining qualified students.
- When a lottery is necessary, qualifying twins follow this procedure: If one twin gets in during the lottery, the other twin becomes a sibling and follows the established sibling guidelines for admission.

Standard 5 – Instructional Delivery Models

Research indicates that gifted and talented students' academic and social emotional needs are best met in classrooms with other students with similar abilities and with fluid, flexible groupings that change as needed based upon students' interest and abilities. G/T instruction shall be delivered in one of the following instructional delivery models: **1) G/T homogeneous classrooms, 2) G/T clusters in the general classroom, or 3) a combination of G/T homogeneous and G/T cluster models.** Each model enables G/T students to work together as a group, work with other students, and work independently during the school day as well as the entire school year. Flexible grouping patterns and independent investigations are employed in the four core academic areas.

Prior to selecting a delivery model for each school/grade, the school shall conduct a comprehensive analysis of G/T student numbers per grade level, students' instructional and language needs, staff credentials and training, and prior G/T experience of G/T students and staff, as they relate to the schools' academic goals/objectives. Additionally, the school must be able to demonstrate they have obtained parent/community support for the selected delivery model(s) and describe how the instructional delivery will be monitored to ensure that the appropriate differentiation of instruction will occur. Following this review, the campus principal, serving as the administrator with program responsibility, in collaboration with the Site-Based Decision Making Committee (SDMC), shall determine which instructional delivery model is best suited for their G/T students and submit the selection to the Regional Superintendent for approval.

A description of each instructional delivery model follows:

- **G/T Homogeneous Classroom** – G/T students (zoned and non-zoned/transfers) are mixed together in self-contained classes/courses and receive specialized G/T instruction in the four (4) core content areas (Language Arts/Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies) from a teacher who is appropriately G/T trained. These classes are comprised only of G/T students.
- **G/T Clusters in the General Classroom** – G/T students (zoned and non-zoned/transfers) are grouped or clustered with non-G/T students and receive differentiated G/T instruction in the four (4) core content areas (Language

Arts/Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies) in a self-contained classroom setting from a teacher who is appropriately G/T trained. The non-G/T student should be those who are able to handle the rigor of the G/T instruction. This model is appropriate when there are insufficient G/T students to form homogeneous classes at any grade.

- **Combination G/T Homogeneous & G/T Clusters** – This delivery model is most appropriate in schools with varying numbers of G/T students at each grade level.

Standard 6 – Curriculum and Instruction

HISD is committed to providing all identified G/T students a rigorous curriculum using appropriate high-yield instructional strategies to ensure the quality inherent in Vanguard (G/T) Programs. Therefore, all Vanguard (G/T) programs (Neighborhood or Magnet) shall implement the district's G/T Curriculum Framework, *Scholars & Knowledge* in grades K-12. This continuum of learning establishes program services that are comprehensive, structured, sequenced and appropriately challenging. *Scholars & Knowledge* overlays HISD's core CLEAR curriculum with differentiation through acceleration, adding depth and complexity, higher level thinking skills, and developing independent research skills focusing on advanced level products. All G/T teachers shall utilize the best practices guide in evaluating their students' advanced level products at each grade level.

- In grades K-5, G/T students shall receive instruction daily by a G/T trained teacher implementing *Scholars & Knowledge* in the **four** core content areas (Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies), emphasizing advanced level products.
- In grades 6-8, G/T students shall receive instruction daily in the **four** core content areas (Language Arts/Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies), in Pre-AP or IBMYP classes with a G/T Pre-AP and/or IBMYP trained teacher implementing *Scholars & Knowledge*, emphasizing advanced level products.
- In grades 9-12, G/T students shall be enrolled in at least **two** advanced classes (Pre-AP, AP, dual credit, IBMYP, and/or IB) with appropriately trained teachers emphasizing advanced level products.

Standard 7 – Monitoring Program Implementation-Quality - Rigor

HISD is committed to ensuring that all Vanguard (G/T) programs operate in accordance with state law and district procedures/guidelines established by the Advanced Academics Department. Measures will be put in place to provide continual monitoring by campus-based, regional, and central office staff in areas that impact instruction and student achievement. Campus-based monitoring strategies shall include, but not be limited to:

- **Campus G/T Coordinator** - Each campus principal shall designate a Campus G/T Coordinator to assist in implementing the G/T requirements, monitoring classroom instruction, and serving as an information liaison for the regional office, central office, and parents. Campus G/T Coordinators shall be paid a stipend, payable in June from the campus budget, in accordance with the HISD Compensation Manual.

- **Instructional Delivery Model** - Each campus principal shall submit annually to the Regional Superintendent and Executive Principal for approval his/her campus G/T instructional model(s) with documentation of the comprehensive analysis and approval by the Campus Site-Based Decision Making Committee (SDMC).
- **Academic Rigor** – Each campus principal, in collaboration with his/her leadership team, shall establish a process for systematically monitoring teachers' implementation of the *Scholars & Knowledge* framework. The process shall include random walk-through evaluations of G/T classroom instruction during the 1st grading cycle, with follow-up observations and/or reviews for improvement as needed, as well as frequent reviews of students' advanced level products.
- **G/T Common Grade Planning** – Each campus principal shall provide G/T teachers with opportunities for common-grade planning at least once every grading cycle to ensure alignment of course requirements and review of students' advanced level products.
- **G/T Vertical Team Planning** – Each campus principal shall ensure that G/T teachers have opportunities for cross-grade planning at least once every grading cycle to ensure vertical alignment across the grades.

Standard 8 – Student Success (Expectations)

Students who are identified as G/T and who participate in Vanguard (G/T) programs will be expected to meet all district and state academic achievement standards as well as the following achievement standards. Individual school programs will be evaluated annually on these measures of achievement for G/T students in grades 1-11.

- G/T students shall be expected to score above grade level on the district required Stanford/Aprena as appropriate. LEP/Sp. Ed./504 students will be expected to show annual growth on these or related assessments when tested in the same language.
- G/T students shall be expected to score at the commended level on TAKS.
- G/T students enrolled in AP/IB classes that have corresponding College Board/International Baccalaureate exams shall be encouraged to take related exams. Schools shall examine funding resources for the exams and make information available to students as needed.

Students who do not meet the academic standards listed above or who do not meet promotion standards will be placed on a Growth Plan for a minimum of one grading cycle.

Standard 9 – Professional Development for Administrators

All HISD administrators responsible for Vanguard (G/T) programs and/or G/T students are required to complete a total of 9 hours of G/T professional development as mandated by state law and district Advanced Academics Guidelines. Professional development is offered annually in the fall semester through the HISD Professional Development Department, the Advanced Academics Department, and by regional staff authorized through the Advanced Academics Department. The following training sessions comply with the state and district requirements:

- State Requirement: Minimum 6 hours in “Nature and Needs of G/T Students with Program Options”
- HISD Requirement: Minimum 3 hours in “Monitoring Academic Rigor and Advanced Level Products in the G/T Classroom”. This training will provide a variety of tools for administrators to use in monitoring G/T classrooms and to provide support for teachers in the implementation of *Scholars & Knowledge*.

Evidence of completion of the aforementioned training shall be kept at the campus level for audit purposes.

Standard 10 – Professional Development for G/T Teachers

All HISD elementary teachers responsible for Vanguard (G/T) programs and/or G/T students are required to complete the 30 core hours of G/T professional development within their first semester after assignment (and 6 hours follow-up each year thereafter) as mandated by state law and the HISD Advanced Academics Guidelines.

All HISD secondary teachers responsible for Vanguard (G/T) programs and/or G/T students are required to fulfill the state mandated 30 core hours of G/T professional development with the following training: 6 hours in Nature and Needs of G/T Students, 6 hours in Identifying/Assessing G/T Student’s Needs, and 18 hours of core training in Pre-AP, AP and/or IBMYP and IBO.

An additional HISD requirement is that all G/T teachers, K-12, receive training in the district’s G/T Curriculum Framework, *Scholars & Knowledge* which includes best practices for G/T instruction and strategies for advanced level products.

Professional development is offered throughout the school year and during summer institutes to accommodate new hires. Training is conducted through the HISD Professional Development Department, the Advanced Academics Department, regional staff authorized through the Advanced Academics Department and outside sources such as Region IV and the Harris County Department of Education. Evidence of completion of the aforementioned training shall be kept at the campus level for audit purposes.

Standard 11 – Data Quality and Compliance

Each HISD school will comply with all state and district guidelines regarding the management and operation of Vanguard (G/T) programs, related documentation, and related budgets.

Campus-based personnel, who have been specifically designated by the principal, are responsible for the accuracy of data related to G/T student eligibility and services on SIS in accordance with procedures established by the Federal and State Compliance Department and the Advanced Academics Department.

Standard 12 – Parent/Community Communication and Involvement

In accordance with the HISD Advanced Academic Guidelines, principals must inform parents of G/T services and choices through multiple sources, which should include but not be limited to, campus newsletters/brochures and parent informational meetings. Schools shall also provide information regarding the Vanguard (G/T) application process and deadlines, the district's assessment requirements and timelines, and the identification process that applies to all applicants. Program design/delivery decisions must be made annually in collaboration with the Site-Based Decision Making Committee (SDMC) and with the support of the community at large. Parent Surveys form part of the district's annual evaluation of the Vanguard (G/T) programs and may require campus-based distribution to selected parents.

G/T students may participate in a variety of extra-curricular program opportunities supported by the district or offered through their school, such as Odyssey of the Mind, Academic Decathlon, Future Problem Solving & Creative Problem Solving Programs. Principals shall inform students and their parents of these opportunities and encourage/facilitate participation as appropriate.

Standard 13 – Evaluation

G/T programs will be evaluated annually to measure compliance with state/district guidelines, student outcomes, adherence to standards, and overall program delivery. The Vanguard (G/T) program evaluation shall include district-wide and campus by campus reports. The Vanguard G/T Program Evaluation shall be submitted to the school board and reviewed with HISD administration, regional, and campus-based staff. Results of the evaluations will be used to make recommendations for improvement.

Standard 14 – District Commitment and Support

Each Vanguard (G/T) program will receive support from the district in the following areas:

- HISD bus transportation for qualified Vanguard (G/T) Magnet students within the transportation guidelines.
- Budgetary support through the district's GF1 funds (fund 108) which equals to a 12% add-on rate (to the ADA rate) for each student appropriately coded as G/T on PEIMS.
- Regional Office support and services provided by the regional office staff, including executive principals and designated regional G/T specialists, shall include classroom monitoring, data quality, professional development for teachers/parents, and service networking.
- Central Office support and services provided by the Advanced Academics Department shall include district applications, forms/letters, professional development, instructional monitoring tools, program guidelines, service networking, and parent information/training.