

Gifted and Talented Program

PEP

**Primary Enrichment Program
Grades K-2**

PACE

**Program for Academics,
Creativity, and Enrichment
Grades 3-12**



Howe Independent School District

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Howe Independent School District

GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM

PHILOSOPHY AND RATIONALE

Howe Independent School District provides a gifted and talented program for students in grades kindergarten through twelve according to the guidelines mandated by state law, Section 29.121-123 of the Texas Education Code.

The charge given to the Howe ISD is to educate every child to the fullest of his/her potential. In the process of helping each learner reach this potential, it is important that individual differences be recognized. Based on the view that each student has a special and unique potential, the philosophy of the Howe Independent School District Gifted and Talented Program reflects an understanding of the unique social, emotional, and intellectual needs of gifted and talented students and a commitment to providing appropriate educational opportunities to accommodate these needs and differences. Howe ISD recognizes that gifted students, in order to realize their contribution to self and society, require a differentiated educational program and/or services beyond those normally offered in the regular school program.

To help all students reach their potential, the Gifted and Talented Program provides a challenging and stimulating environment that accommodates students' differences and offers an array of educational opportunities commensurate with the abilities of the students. While the Gifted and Talented Program is designed to meet the unique needs of identified gifted students, it shall appropriately reinforce and be compatible with other programs in the school district.

STATE GOALS 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/or performances of students of similar age, experience, or environment. High school graduates who have participated in services for gifted students will have produced products and/or performances of professional quality as part of their program services. [Texas State Board of Education, May 2002]

The State Plan is divided into five sections: *Student Assessment, Program Design, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development*, and *Family-Community Involvement*. Each of these sections lists the acceptable (required of all school districts in the State of Texas), recognized, and exemplary practices school districts may employ. To achieve recognized or exemplary program status, a school district must apply to the Texas Education Agency and submit its program for agency review and designation.

DEFINITION OF A GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENT

A “gifted and talented student” is 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. A “gifted and talented student” also exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area, possesses an unusual capacity for leadership, or excels in a specific academic field.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

The Howe ISD Gifted and Talented Program is based on general intellectual ability. This is defined as general intelligence and aptitudes or abilities to reason, perceive, and understand. Assessment of students for the Gifted and Talented Program includes multiple measures of general intellectual ability. Qualitative and quantitative measures are used in the identification process. Assessment tools may include but may not be limited to the (1) Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test (NNAT), (2) Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary and Middle School Students-Second Edition (SAGES-2), (3) Gifted and Talented Evaluation Scale (GATES), (4) Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test-Second Edition (KBIT-2), (5) Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. Based on a review of information gathered during the assessment process, the selection committee recommends placement for students whose data reflect that program placement is the most appropriate educational setting. The committee reviews each student’s profile, which is identified by number rather than name, and makes a decision regarding placement based on committee consensus.

Board policies on student assessment are reviewed at least once every three years and modified as needed.

All populations of the district have access to assessment and services offered as part of the program for gifted students regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic positions, language proficiency, or disability.

IDENTIFICATION

The ongoing identification process includes three stages: nomination of students to the program, screening of students during which all pertinent information is gathered and prepared for committee review, and selection of students for whom the gifted program is the appropriate educational placement. Instruments and procedures used to assess students for program services measure diverse abilities and intelligences and provide students an opportunity to demonstrate their talents and strengths. Typically, only a small group of students, approximately 5%, is identified as gifted/talented and is placed in the Gifted and Talented Program.

NOMINATION

Nominations are accepted at any time during the school year up to the spring nomination deadline. However, testing and identification is completed according to a published district assessment and identification schedule. Referrals may be made by teachers or parents in grades 1-12 and by self-referral in grades 7-12.

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Annually, the nomination process is advertised by each campus using two or more of the following methods:

- Letter or communiqué sent home via each student
- Announcement in newsletter
- Notice on district website
- Announcement in local newspaper
- Campus meeting
- Other communication tools deemed effective by the campus principal

The principal or designee communicates nomination procedures and timelines to all professional and paraprofessional staff members.

SCREENING

During this phase, each nominated student is closely evaluated. Written parental consent is obtained before any special testing or individual assessment is conducted. This assessment is based on multiple and specific criteria and on objective and subjective information consistent with the Texas Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students. Screening includes teacher observation, standardized tests, and tests of intellectual and productive abilities.

K-2 Screening

At the end of the first semester, all kindergarten students are screened for placement in the K-2 primary enrichment program (PEP). High-level performers are identified by February 1 and served in the regular classroom.

In addition, students who exhibit **superior aptitude and remarkably high ability levels** proceed with further assessment for placement in the gifted program by March 1. All students are re-screened in the spring of their second grade year for placement in the gifted and talented program in the fall of their third grade academic year.

Grades 3-12 Screening

Students in grades 3-12 are screened during the spring identification period for placement in the gifted and talented program in the fall of the following academic year.

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SELECTION

The selection phase is conducted by the Gifted and Talented Selection Committee composed of at least three professional educators who have completed training as mandated by Texas Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students. Committee members are chosen from the following:

- Building principal
- Campus GT teacher (s)
- Campus counselor

The selection committee evaluates each nominated student according to the established criteria, and selects those students for whom gifted program placement is the most appropriate educational setting. Parents and students are notified in writing of the committee's decision, and written parental consent will be obtained before a student is placed in the GIFTED AND TALENTED PROGRAM.

REASSESSMENT

The district will not perform routine reassessment.

PROBATION

Students may be placed on a six-week probation at the request of the student, student's parent, classroom teacher, or GT teacher. Reasons for probation would most likely include underachievement and/or lack of motivation or task commitment, excessive absences, inability to cope with classroom pressures related to participation in the GT class, or quality of work below the GT standards of 70+ each six weeks. A parent conference is scheduled to discuss the probation. During probation, the student stays in the gifted and talented program and continues to attend. At the end of the probationary period, the student is removed from probation, placed on furlough, or exited from the Gifted and Talented Program.

FURLOUGHS

Students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the structure of the gifted program may be placed on furlough by the selection committee for specified reasons and for up to one year. During furlough, the student will not attend gifted and talented classes but will remain in the gifted and talented program. The purpose of such a furlough is to provide the student an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the selection committee. The request for a furlough may be initiated by a school administrator, teacher, school counselor, parent, or the student.

Students are allowed one furlough for each campus level. At the end of the furlough, the student's progress shall be reassessed, and the student may reenter the gifted program or be removed from the program. The committee may consider extenuating circumstances.

EXITING

Student performance in the Gifted and Talented Program is monitored and assessed. A student is removed from the program at any time the selection committee determines it is in the student's best interest. This decision is based upon student performance in the program, the student's educational and emotional needs, and other appropriate considerations. The decision is finalized after consultation with the parent and student regarding the most appropriate educational placement.

Parents may request that a student be removed from the gifted program at any time by submitting a written request or by contacting the campus GT coordinator. Once the exiting form is completed, the student is placed in the regular education program. In order to re-enter the GT program, the student must re-qualify.

FORMER GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

If a gifted and talented student in good standing leaves the school district and returns within one calendar year, the student is eligible to re-enter the Gifted and Talented Program. If a gifted and talented student leaves the school district for more than one year, the student must be screened during the next scheduled screening period for re-entry into the Gifted and Talented Program.

STUDENTS NEW TO THE DISTRICT

Students entering the Howe Independent School District who have not been previously identified as gifted and talented by another district must wait until the next scheduled screening period for consideration.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

When a student identified as gifted from a previous school district transfers into the district, the student's records shall be reviewed by the selection committee to determine if placement in the District's program for gifted students is appropriate. Transfer students are assessed and appropriately placed within 30 school days of enrollment in the district. Transfer students must meet the same identification criteria as students nominated within the district.

APPEALS

In the event that a parent or teacher feels that an error has been made, appeals shall be made in the following order:

1. Teacher
2. Principal/Campus Committee
3. Superintendent
4. Board of Trustees

An appeal must be made in a timely manner (within 30 days of notice of placement/non-placement) and appellants must file a written appeal to the selection committee stating reasons that the data gathered during screening does not give an accurate account of the child's performance and ability.

PROGRAM DESIGN

The goal of the Howe Independent School District gifted and talented program is to provide opportunities for students to explore their own unique abilities, develop high creative and cognitive thinking processes, make a positive contribution to their own education and to society, and fulfill their learning potential. To provide a flexible system of viable program options, Howe ISD offers an array of learning opportunities that are commensurate with the abilities of gifted/talented students and that emphasize the four core academic areas. Services are available during each school day as well as the entire school year. Students are given opportunities to work together as a group, with other students, and independently. Gifted students may also participate in credit by examination, Pre-AP and AP classes, early high school graduation, dual/concurrent enrollment, correspondence courses, independent studies, and the Distinguished Achievement Program. Parents are informed of these options by means of campus handbooks, newsletters, meetings, e-mail, or other appropriate methods.

Specialists and program advocates for gifted students are consulted in the development of program policies and options. Howe ISD is a member of and participates in Region X's Education Service Center Gifted and Talented Cooperative. This group provides opportunities for teacher training, administrator training, parent involvement, program development and evaluation support, student activities, and enrichment programs. Educational sessions are directed by experts in the field of gifted and talented education. Additionally, these services provide the means for Howe ISD students to interact with identified students from other districts in the region.

PEP

The Primary Enrichment Program in grades K-2 provides a differentiated curriculum with an emphasis on thinking skills development. These students will be served in the regular classroom by teachers who have completed the required 30-hours of professional development. All teachers will have obtained the required gifted and talented professional training. In the spring of second grade, all students will be screened for PACE (Program of Academics, Creativity and Enrichment).

PACE

Grades 3-8

The Program for Academics, Creativity, and Enrichment provides a differentiated curriculum of challenging learning experiences in the areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies. Identified gifted students in grades 3-4 are served through a weekly ninety minute pull-out program. In grades 5-8, identified students are served through a daily forty-five minute pull-out program. Gifted students are encouraged to expand their interests and areas of strength through art, band, theater arts, and UIL activities.

Grades 9-12

The Howe High School Gifted and Talented Program is comprised of two components: an elective GT class and an independent study/mentorship. Students are required to participate in these components to maintain their gifted program status. In addition to these components, GT students will receive differentiated instruction through “honors” classes in the four core curriculum areas (language arts, science, math, and social studies) based on the student’s strength and talent.

Identified gifted freshman and sophomore students will enroll in a gifted course offered as an elective credit. This course will be a multi-grade level class with a humanities-based curriculum focusing on creative thinking and problem solving.

Identified gifted junior and senior level students will enroll in an independent study program in the field of their strength. Students will meet regularly with their mentors, keep a journal of their meetings, and present a final product at the end of the year.

Guidelines for the mentor program include:

1. Each student must visit his/her mentor at least 3 times each semester.
2. Each visit must be pre-approved by the gifted teacher and should not occur in consecutive weeks unless requested by the mentor. Visits will not be permitted on days of major tests or projects.
3. Students must spend at least 6 hours with the mentor for each visit.
4. The student’s journal will serve as documentation for each visit and should include an account of the daily activities. The journal is due to the gifted teacher the next school day after each visit.
5. The final product (video, pamphlet, brochure, computer presentation, etc.) is required of each student in the mentor program.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Gifted education teachers implement curriculum instruction that meets the needs of gifted students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the general school program. Emphasis is placed on the four core academic areas and a continuum of learning experiences is provided that leads to advanced-level products and/or performances. In-school and out-of-school opportunities are provided relevant to students' area of strength. Teachers provide students the opportunity to develop tools for further learning through critical and creative thinking, oral and written communication, and guided and independent research.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Howe ISD will identify professional needs and plan opportunities for staff development to train professional personnel to work in the program. All personnel involved in the planning, development, and delivery of services to gifted students will be trained to provide appropriate options and curricula for GT students. Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program will have a minimum of thirty clock hours of staff development that includes nature and needs of GT students, assessment of student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students as required by 19 TAC § 89.2 (1). Teachers without the required training who are a part of the GT program must complete the thirty-hour training within one semester [19 TAC § 89.2 (2)]. Teachers who provide instruction and services additionally receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted children [19 TAC § 89.2 (3)]. The district provides opportunities and release time for both gifted education teachers and regular education teachers to attend workshops, seminars, and conferences to enhance their ability to serve identified students. Information about such opportunities is made available to professional staff on a regular basis. Personnel files document these credentials.

The district provides an orientation to the district and campus programs for GT students through campus handbooks, newsletters, meetings, mail-outs, email, and other methods. Faculty and staff are advised of the programs via meetings and printed materials.

Administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs and program options for GT students [19 TAC § 89.2 (4)].

Evaluation of professional development activities for GT education is ongoing, and the results of the evaluation are used in making decisions regarding future staff development plans. [19 TAC § 89.5]

FAMILY-COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Information about the Howe ISD Gifted and Talented Program is available to parents and community members to encourage the opportunity to develop an understanding of and support for the program. Families are advised of written policies on identification procedures and learning opportunities via student handbooks, district policy, newsletters, parent meetings, email, the district website, and other appropriate sources.

The district encourages community and family participation in services designed for gifted students, and products and achievements of gifted students are shared with the community through presentations, newspaper articles, newsletter articles, public displays, and other appropriate measures.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Program and student progress is a part of the program evaluation. The district evaluates program effectiveness annually and uses the data to modify and update the district and campus improvement plans. Parents are included in the evaluation process. Program changes are based on needs assessment and evaluation results, as well as State law and policy changes.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Howe ISD will spend no more than 15% of state funds allocated for gifted/talented education on indirect costs.