

LIBERTY ISD

SEARCH

Handbook

Student Enrichment Above Regular Curriculum Horizons



Gifted & Talented Program

1600 Grand Liberty, Texas 77575

Updated July 2011

Purpose of Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to provide the Liberty ISD staff and public with information, procedures, and policies regarding the District's gifted and talented program (SEARCH – Student Enrichment Above Regular Curriculum Horizons). Included within are program definitions, descriptions, screening instruments, and other information related to gifted students. Further questions regarding SEARCH may be answered by campus principals, counselors or the District's program director.

State Definition of GT Students

S29.121. DEFINITION

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.

Taken from the **Texas Education Agency Education Code, Title 19, Part II, Chapter 29 Educational Programs subchapter D: Educational Programs for Gifted and Talented Students.**

Liberty Independent School District Definition of G/T Students

Academically talented students in the Liberty Independent School District are the top five to ten percent of any given class who excel consistently, or who show the potential to excel when compared to others of the same age, experience or environment in any one or a combination of the following areas:

- general intellectual ability,
- specific subject matter aptitude, and/or
- creative and productive thinking ability

These students may require educational experiences beyond or differentiated from those provided in regular school programs.

BRIGHT CHILD

Knows the answer
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 straightforward, sequential presentation
Is alert
Is pleased with own learning

GIFTED LEARNER

Asks the questions
Is highly curious
Is mentally and physically developed
Has wild, silly ideas
Plays around, yet tests well
Discusses in detail, elaborates
Beyond the group
Shows strong feelings, 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

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GIFTED THAT TEND TO SCREEN THEM OUT OF PROGRAMS

Bored with routine tasks, refuses to do rote homework
Difficult to get him/her to move into another topic
Is self-critical, impatient with failures
Is critical about others, of the teachers
Often disagrees vocally with others, with the teacher
Makes jokes or puns at inappropriate times
Emotionally sensitive – may overreact, get angry easily or ready to cry if things go wrong
Not interested in details; hands in messy work
Refuses to accept authority; nonconforming, stubborn
Tends to dominate others

SPECIAL NEEDS AND LIABILITIES OF GIFTED STUDENTS

1. Because they learn easily and rapidly, they may often have time that they may not know how to manage.
2. Because of their natural curiosity, keen observation and superior ability to do conceptual thinking, they may often appear overly aggressive and conceited to their teachers and classmates.
3. They dislike drill and repetition, even as much as they sometimes need it.
4. Because of their superior ability, they may become interested only in perfection or may bog down in goals that are beyond present attainment.
5. They think faster than they can write and often turn in work of varying degrees of "sloppiness".
6. Sometimes when they are required to do a task which they already know they may react negatively to the teacher, the subject, the school, and the whole formal process of learning.
7. They may come to dislike their superior ability because it sometimes prevents them from being accepted by their peers or from gaining appropriate recognition or approval.
8. They usually show superior emotional, social, and physical development.
9. They may not always understand their potential or perceive it in relation to social responsibility.
10. Because of their superior ability, the lack of pressure to work, and the lack of proper challenge, many of them never learn the habit of sustained effort.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP?

Parents share with the school an important responsibility in helping their children achieve their maximum potential. Some of the ways in which parents can supplement and extend the school program are:

1. Share an interest in reading with your children. Read to them and discuss with them the books they are reading. Be sure they have a library card and have the opportunity to use it often.
2. Encourage originality by helping your child make their own toys, projects, or models from wood, clay, or other materials which may be available.
3. Encourage questions. Help children find books or other sources which can provide answers rather than attempting to answer all questions yourself.
4. Stimulate creative thinking and problem solving by encouraging children to try out solutions without fear of making mistakes. Help them to value their thinking, learn from their mistakes, and encourage them to try again.
5. Foster good work habits and help children to plan their work and then be sure they complete their plan. This applies to daily tasks at home and in the community as well as school work.
6. Find time for the family to talk together about many different things. Help your children work toward expressing themselves better.
7. Take trips together to places of interest such as museums, exhibitions, fairs, government and community agencies.
8. Allow for some free time. Encourage your children to wonder, to engage in reflective thought, and to appreciate the world around them.
9. Turn off the television and be a real companion to your children. Explore and share each other's thinking. Enjoy your children, and help them to remember their childhood with pleasure.

The gifted child is still a child, no matter what his/her talent. That child needs to run and play and laugh and daydream just as other children do. Nevertheless, rearing a gifted child is a challenge, but the task becomes less fearful when the parent knows the school is a helpful partner. If you have special concerns, call and share them with your child's teacher.

Below is a composite from several authorities, in the field of gifted children, offering suggestions for parents.

PARENTS SHOULD DO THE FOLLOWING

1. Realize they are teachers, and that they teach by example.
2. Provide varied materials for learning.
3. Interact with their child verbally. The gifted child needs to hear the many ways words are used and have the opportunity to use new words.
4. Interact with their child intellectually. A gifted child needs to take part in discussion to learn to reason and communicate.
5. Interact with their child socially and emotionally. Social settings should be established in which he/she can express, yet control, emotions.
6. Encourage the child's questions and answer those questions in terms that are easily understood.
7. Demonstrate respect for reading and learning by their own behavior.
8. Tell stories to the child and encourage and listen to the child as she/he tells stories.
9. Provide an assortment of books and magazines for reading aloud, discussion, and enjoyment.

Philosophy of SEARCH Program

Liberty ISD continues to reach all students and motivate them to achieve their fullest potential. SEARCH is but one of the means of fulfilling individual student needs. LISD believes that the students in this program should be those who consistently show the potential to excel in general intellectual ability, specific subject matter aptitude, creativity, and /or leadership. The SEARCH program is designed to serve students identified as excelling in these areas through multiple criteria. These students usually require educational experiences beyond those normally provided through the regular school program. The district recognizes that students identified as gifted and talented can come from all races, socioeconomic groups, geographical locales, and environments.

Liberty ISD Goals for SEARCH Program

Liberty ISD SEARCH staff offers the following goals to improve current program opportunities for students and staff:

- To provide students with critical, logical and creative thinking and research skills necessary to become problem solvers and independent learners.
- To challenge each student to utilize individual talents to reach his/her fullest potential.
- To encourage students to develop leadership skills and apply those skills in the community.
- To offer ongoing training for all teachers in gifted methodology, curriculum compacting, nature and needs of the gifted child, and strategies to address special needs in the classroom.
- To develop a scope and sequence for developing critical, logical and creative thinking skills in K-12, based on district defined expectations and the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

SEARCH Program Description

The Liberty Independent School District's gifted/talented program began with the formation of a steering committee in 1980. The formal program began in the spring of 1981 with limited service provided for students in grades 2-8. Later named SEARCH (Student Enrichment Above Regular Curriculum Horizons), the program now includes students in grades k-12.

The SEARCH program serves students grades k-12 who are identified through the use of a profile that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data. Kindergarten students are identified by a composite profile of individually administered kindergarten assessments, parent surveys, early childhood teacher checklists, portfolio activities and norm-referenced instruments. Students in grades 1-12 are identified using data compiled from parent surveys, portfolio activities, norm-referenced instruments, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), student interviews and standardized ability indexes.

Kindergarten through second grade SEARCH students are served daily in regular education classrooms by teachers who have acquired a minimum of 30 hours of training in the area of gifted instruction. In addition, a resource teacher provides enrichment activities for all kindergarten, first and second grade students through a k-5 pullout program. Identified students meet with other GT students once a week to pursue creativity and leadership activities in lieu of regular classroom instruction. Students in grades 6-12 are served through honors/ pre-AP/AP, and Discovery classes in the core curricular areas.

The instructional staff members of the LISD are expected to enrich the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) with depth and complexity in order to meet the needs of these students. This requires differentiated instruction and opportunities for critical and creative thinking, as well as the use of logic, research and listening skills. Staff development opportunities in GT methodology, curriculum, and the nature and needs of the gifted student are provided on a regular basis by the district. Teachers and administrators also attend workshops and training offered by other organizations, such as the Regional Educational Service Centers.

The SEARCH program is supervised by the Director of State/Federal Programs. Coordination of the SEARCH program includes campus principals, counselors, and SEARCH teachers.

Furloughs

The purpose of a furlough is to provide students an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the selection committee. Students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the structure of the gifted and talented program may be placed on furlough by the selection committee.

A SEARCH student may apply for a furlough or leave of absence from the program by submitting a written request to the campus counselor. The request should state the expected time period, the student's reason for needing the furlough, and must be signed by the student's parent. Reasons might include a lengthy illness, scheduling conflicts, temporary involvement in other demanding activities, or extenuating situations in the student's personal life. The campus SEARCH committee will consider the request and, if approved, the student will be withdrawn temporarily from the program. The student will be able to reenter the program within one calendar year without having to go through the identification process by submitting a written request to the school counselor.

SEARCH students who leave Liberty ISD to attend another district shall be considered on furlough for a period not to exceed one full calendar year. If the student reenters the district within that year, and transfer records indicated that the student is in good standing in the last district, the student will be eligible to return to the program without going through any additional screening processes.

SEARCH Identification Instruments May Include But Are Not Limited To:

Product Portfolio/Writing Sample

SAGES 2

Parent Survey

Renzulli/Hartman Scale for Rating Behavior

Learning Characteristics
Motivational Characteristics
Creativity Characteristics
Leadership Characteristics

Renzulli-Smith Checklist for Early Childhood (K-1)

Teacher Subject Inventories

Student Interview

Otis Lennon School Ability Test or equivalent

ITBS

Student Self-Assessment

Other sources the committee may consider include the **Texas Primary Reading Inventory, STAAR ASSESSMENTS, TAKS Tests, End-of Course Exams,** and **other standardized instruments** when available.

Nomination/Placement

Teachers, parents, community members, other district professionals such as counselors or principals, or the students themselves may nominate a student for placement in the SEARCH program. Automatic screening procedures are also in place for students in grades K-2. Student portfolios with a rating of 3.5 or above initiate the screening process. Also a score at or above 95% in both reading and math on the norm-referenced tests or any recognized IQ test will result in an automatic screening process. A score of 120 or above on the Otis Lennon School Ability Test (either verbal or nonverbal section) is another method that causes the student's record to be screened.

Once a nomination is made by any of the means discussed previously, the process then goes to campus counselor, who will distribute the checklists to the parents, teachers, students, etc. The counselor also gathers the other necessary information, e.g. test scores. Once compiled, the information is forwarded to the district SEARCH committee, which meets once a semester, for final screening. Students are identified on a case-by-case basis according to the profile. Notification is sent to the parents and students regarding the committee's decision.

Provisions for Appeal

Parents or students may appeal any final decision of the selection committee regarding selection for or removal from the gifted program. Appeals should be made first to the district selection committee. A conference with the person(s) submitting the appeal will follow. All subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with school board policy FNG (LOCAL) beginning at Level Two.

One of the provisions of the appeals process allows the students to be retested with appropriate testing instruments to determine if scores change based on the second administration. If at least one semester has passed since the previous referral, then the new evaluations may be requested. The campus selection committee will be given all the data from both testing sequences for the purpose of determining selection to the program.

Terms

NOMINATION	Students may be nominated for the gifted and talented program at any time by teachers, counselors, parents, or other interested persons.
IDENTIFICATION	Criteria to identify gifted and talented students shall be established in the Board-approved program for the gifted and talented. The criteria shall be specific to the state definition of gifted and talented and shall ensure the fair assessment of students with special needs, such as the culturally different, the economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities.
PARENTAL CONSENT	Written parental consent shall be obtained before any special testing or individual assessment is conducted as part of the screening and identification process. All student information collected during the screening and identification process shall be an educational record, subject to the protections set out in policies at FL.
SELECTION	A selection committee shall evaluate each nominated student according to the established criteria and shall select those students for whom gifted program placement is the most appropriate educational setting. The committee shall be composed of at least three professional educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students and shall be established for the District.
ASSESSMENTS	Data collected through both objective and subjective assessments shall be measured against the criteria approved by the Board to determine individual eligibility for the program. Assessment tools may include but not be limited to the following: achievement tests ,intelligence tests, behavioral checklists completed by teachers and parents, teacher nominations based on classroom observations, cumulative grade/subject averages, student self assessments, and student work products, if available.

NOTIFICATION

Parents and students shall be notified in writing upon selection of the student for the gifted program. Participation in any program or services provided is voluntary. The District shall obtain written permission of the students and the parents before a student is placed in a gifted program.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

When a student identified as gifted by a previous school district transfers to the District, the student's records shall be reviewed by the selection committee to determine if placement in the District's program for gifted and talented students is appropriate.

The committee shall make its determination within 30 days of the student's enrollment in the District and shall base its decision on the transferred student's records, if comparable to the data the District normally gathers, and observation reports of District teachers who instruct the student. The selection committee shall request additional data on the student during the first 6 weeks of the student's enrollment and placement decisions shall be made at the end of that six-week period.

FURLOUGH

Students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the structure of the gifted and talented program may be placed on furlough by the selection committee. The purpose of such a furlough is to provide the students an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the selection committee. A furlough also may be granted at the request of the student and/or parent.

A student may be furloughed for a period of time deemed appropriate by the selection committee. At the end of the furlough, the student's progress shall be reassessed, and the student may re-enter the gifted program, be removed from the program, or be placed on another furlough.

EXIT PROVISIONS

Students performance shall be monitored. A student shall be removed from the program at any time the selection committee determines it is in the student's best interest. If a students or parent requests removal from the program, the selection committee shall meet

with the parent and student before honoring the request.

APPEALS

Parents of students may appeal any final decision of the selection committee regarding selection for or removal from the gifted program. Appeal shall be made first to the selection committee. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with FNG (LOCAL) beginning at Level Two.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The gifted program shall be evaluated periodically, and evaluation information shall be shared with Board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, students in the gifted and talented program, and the community.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The District shall ensure that information about the District's gifted and talented program is available to parents and community members, and that they have an opportunity to develop an understanding of support for the program.