

ELKHART INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL PROGRAMS IN-SERVICE SUMMARY

GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Elkhart ISD is committed to excellence in education for all students. Recognizing that this commitment demands fostering and developing the abilities of gifted and talented students, EISD accepts the responsibility of providing an exemplary instructional program to these students.

Elkhart ISD's philosophy is that the learning characteristics of gifted and talented students dictate learning experiences that differentiate from those provided for them in the regular school program. By providing experiences consistent with the abilities of gifted children, the achievement of those students will be maximized.

The following is condensed from the Appendices to the District Gifted and Talented Plan which can be found on the Elkhart ISD website at www.elkhartisd.org. All staff members interact with G/T students, and, therefore, would benefit from becoming familiar with this information.

Identification of G/T Students

Nature and Needs of Gifted Learners—The following is an abridged listing of characteristics that many gifted learners consistently exhibit when compared to their same-age/grade level peers:

- Learns more rapidly
- Demonstrates stronger need to know
- Uses superior communication skills
- Has longer attention span
- Perceives more unusual relationships
- Sees/creates patterns
- Is more intellectually playful
- Is better at sensing discrepancies
- Exhibits better retention of information
- Is more imaginative

Gifted learners perform at their best when they have stimulating educational experiences that meet their unique learning needs. Increasing their work load is NOT an accepted or endorsed practice. Rather, utilizing sufficiently rigorous, challenging, and coherent practices, such as those contained in the following brief list, can meet the long-term needs of gifted students.

- in depth data/content
- Appropriate content level
- Multi-level sources and resources
- Varied duration of learning activities
- Variety of materials
- Varying complexity of questions/tasks

- Student participation in planning
- Different expectations for different tasks
- Varied means of evaluation

Nomination—Any person familiar with a student’s abilities, potential performance, and/or past performance may nominate that student, grades K-12, for the G/T program. The Nomination Form may be completed by the student, a peer, parent or guardian, grandparent, Elkhart ISD personnel, or other interested community member.

Kindergarten students will be nominated at the beginning of the second semester in order to be served by March 1, as specified in the state plan. Nominations of students in other grades are ongoing and will be accepted at any time during the school year. The process for screening and identifying students in other grades takes place during the fall of each school year; however, students may be nominated on a continuing basis. Parents are made aware of the identification process by information disseminated in the school’s handbook, publications in the local newspaper, and posting of the G/T plan and appendices on the district website.

Screening—all nominees for the Discovery Program are screened, without discrimination in regard to race, color, creed, religious affiliation, economic disadvantage, sex, or disability, in accordance with written campus procedures. Students will be assessed using four or more criteria that include both qualitative and quantitative measures collected from multiple sources for each area of giftedness served by the district. Additionally, students are assessed in languages they understand or with nonverbal-based tests. Data and procedures assure that all EISD populations have access to assessment and, if identified, services offered as part of the program for gifted students.

Selection—After equitable screening of students, the screening committee reviews each nominee’s file. The screening committee compiles and organizes data to facilitate decision-making for the selection of students consistent with district policy and procedures using an individually evaluated scoring matrix. The screening committee makes a professional judgment based on that matrix. Students and their parents/guardians are notified in writing of the screening committee’s decisions.

EISD also specifies transfer, furlough, exit and appeal processes in its gifted and talented policy manual. These are detailed in the “*Appendices to the District Gifted and Talented Plan*” which may be accessed through the district website, www.elkhartisd.org.

Program Design:

EISD provides a program to serve students who are gifted in the areas of intellectual ability and/or creative and productive thinking. The organizational design of the Discovery Program offers an array of learning opportunities that emphasize content in the four core academic areas, enabling G/T students to work together as a group, work with other students, and work independently during the school day for the entire school year. A menu of service options, including the following, is available to G/T students, kindergarten-12th grade, as outlined in written campus procedures for the Discovery Program:

- Regular classroom with G/T-trained teacher providing differentiated instruction
- Pull-out program with G/T-trained resource teacher
- Out-of-school options relevant to student’s area of giftedness

- Pre-Advanced Placement core academics with G/T-trained teacher
- Advanced courses and state-approved Honors Program courses
- College Dual/Concurrent Credit courses arranged between EISD, TVCC, and Angelina Jr. College (CTE related courses)
- Credit by Examination to accelerated instruction, in accordance with agreement with Region VII Education Service Center
- Distinguished Achievement Program
- Texas Performance Standards Project options

Curriculum and Instruction:

Each campus at EISD will offer a variety of program services for delivery to its G/T students. Curriculum for the academically talented must be differentiated from that in the regular classroom and be congruent with the characteristics of gifted children. Appropriately challenging learning experiences that emphasize content for the four core academic areas and address students' individual learning styles and intelligences will be embedded in the curriculum and instructional process for gifted learners in kindergarten through 12th grade. This continuum will lead to the development of advanced-level products and/or performances with opportunity provided to accelerate in areas of student strength.

Professional Development:

In order to provide quality services for our gifted and talented students and to comply with TEA guidelines, EISD will implement the following requirements concerning professional development in advanced academic areas:

- Prior to, or within the first semester of, assignment in the Discovery Program, teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the program for gifted and talented students will have a minimum of 30 clock hours of staff development that includes the following:
 - Nature and Needs of Gifted and Talented Students
 - Identification and Assessment of Gifted and Talented Students
 - Curriculum and Instruction of Gifted and Talented Students
- Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the program for gifted students receive an annual minimum of 6 hours of professional development in gifted education
- Administrators and counselors who have authority for Discovery Program decisions must have a minimum of 6 hours of professional development that include the following:
 - Nature and Needs of Gifted and Talented Students
 - Program options for Gifted and Talented Students
- All staff will receive an annual orientation to the district/campus Discovery Program, including briefing on the nature and needs of gifted and talented students
- Opportunities for professional development in the area of gifted education are provided on a regular basis, generally through the Region VII Education Service Center, and information is disseminated to district personnel by the G/T Coordinator, who maintains staff development records in advanced academic training

- Evaluation of professional development activities for gifted and talented education is ongoing, and evaluation results are used in making decisions regarding future staff development plans

Family-Community Involvement:

EISD has enjoyed a long history of family and community support for its various educational programs and our gifted and talented program is no exception. The following measures help promote active participation and support from those groups:

- Board-approved policies concerning all facets of the Discovery Program are disseminated to parents and community members in the school's handbook and through posting on the district website
- A data bank of community resources is compiled for use by G/T students, teachers, and parents as cooperative support from business and community organizations is established and involvement in services for G/T students is solicited
- The district or campus provides information about the Discovery Program through annual meetings and/or articles published in the local newspaper and campus newsletters
- Family and community members participate in the identification process by nominating prospective students for Discovery Program services
- Parents will be kept informed of requirements of the program, including projects and products to be completed

Program Evaluation:

EISD must ensure that student assessment and services comply with accountability standards included in the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*. A comprehensive manual/program guide that describes all programs, procedures and services for gifted students in grades K-12 is provided for each campus through the Region VII ESC. The effectiveness of the Discovery Program is surveyed annually with input sought from all stakeholders: students, parents, educators, and community members. Annual evaluation of the Discovery Program includes review of curriculum and instruction, and may result in improvement/modification of services to G/T students as stated in district/campus improvement plans. Ongoing evaluation strategies, both formative and summative, are conducted for the purpose of continued program development. Quantitative and qualitative data is reviewed by district and campus site-based advisory committee members in order to determine overall effectiveness of the Discovery Program. Results are shared with the school board, administrators, and other stakeholders.