

# Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD GT Parent Handbook 2021-2022



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## **Gifted and Talented Education in Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD**

The Hurst-Euless-Bedford school district is committed to providing a maximum quality educational program for all its students. Gifted and talented students in the district represent a resource that cannot be neglected. Differentiated and enriched instruction is provided for students K-12 who are identified as academically gifted according to established district criteria which place them in the upper fifth percentile on national norms in general intellectual ability. The State of Texas identifies a gifted student as a child or youth who *performs or shows potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment* when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative or artistic way. Gifted programs in HEB ISD are based on the unique learning needs and characteristics of gifted learners, providing a curriculum to build on the strengths of these students for their future education and for leadership roles in society.

Many enriching experiences await students in this program. Professional staff and consultants in the field of gifted education have designed the program, and all who work with these students receive ongoing training in educating gifted students. Many of our GT teachers receive advanced graduate course work in gifted education. Parents are encouraged to become involved with the district's gifted program. Working together, we believe we can enable our gifted students to achieve their goals and find success.

This handbook will provide you with general information concerning the program, including criteria and procedures for the identification of gifted students in HEB ISD and an overview of the program and curriculum design, K-12. For more specific information, please contact your child's school counselor, STEPS teacher, Advanced Academics Specialist, or the district Advanced Academics Coordinator at Central Administration (817-399-2072).

## **Hurst-Euless-Bedford Independent School District Gifted and Talented Program Goals**

Goals for the Hurst-Euless-Bedford district programs for gifted/talented students are compatible with district goals and philosophy of education which states:

“The mission of the Hurst-Euless-Bedford Independent School District is to continue its proud tradition of excellence as a diverse, high-performing organization committed to ensuring each student is empowered today to excel tomorrow.”

### **Goals for Identified Gifted and Talented Students**

1. To develop in gifted and talented students advanced cognitive processing and critical thinking skills through a multi-dimensional approach, utilizing strategies which focus on higher-level questioning and thinking processes;
2. to guide gifted and talented students at an earlier age to seek original solutions to self-directed problems which require the use of decision making skills and advanced research methodology applied to more advanced content and products;
3. to help gifted and talented students gather, examine, process, and assimilate information from school and community resources for production in areas of self-expression and independent study;
4. to guide gifted and talented students in the development of attitudes and strategies which will enable them to improve their interpersonal relationships with their peers and adults through activities designed to promote greater self-acceptance, acceptance of others, effective group behavior, and communication skills;
5. to help gifted and talented students develop a positive self-concept by becoming more aware of and coping more successfully with their giftedness, in the areas of developing a sense of responsibility for their giftedness, forming realistic self-appraisals and setting worthwhile goals for making valuable contributions to the school, community, and a changing society.

## **Program Description**

### **STEPS (Strategies and Techniques for Enriching Primary Student) K-3**

From kindergarten through grade three, identified gifted students are served through STEPS. In these grade levels, identified gifted students are cluster-grouped within their classes and are taught by teachers who receive training in gifted education. STEPS students have the opportunity to work with their gifted peers on a regularly scheduled basis.

### **PEAK (Pupils Excelling in Ability and Knowledge) 4-6**

Gifted students in grades four and five are served through PEAK, and students in grade six are served through Advanced Academics English. Advanced Academics Math is also offered at grade six. The curriculum is TEKS-aligned and designed to ensure mastery of skills and content knowledge, while providing appropriate acceleration and development of higher-level cognitive processes of analysis, synthesis, and evaluative thinking and leadership skills. Teachers receive training in educating gifted students.

## **Secondary Gifted and Talented**

The program design changes substantially when students move into secondary school. At this level, the Advanced Placement (AP) and/or the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs become the foundation of the gifted program, with the IB program being the recommended program for most gifted students. Students in grades six through ten are prepared to be able to choose either Advanced Placement courses or the International Baccalaureate program through Advanced Academics courses.

Through **Advanced Placement**, students may choose courses that challenge and interest them. The first Advanced Placement courses available are AP Human Geography in the ninth grade at all junior high campuses and AP Spanish Language for native speakers at Hurst Junior High. Students are expected to take and pass the AP test for each AP course they take and may receive college credit if their test score is high enough. Students need to check with the university website to see what kind of entrance credit is awarded for AP scores.

The **International Baccalaureate** Program is a rigorous academic program intended for the highly motivated, college-bound student seeking a well-rounded educational experience. In January 2001, both L. D. Bell High School and Trinity High School were approved for affiliation with the IB program.

Students who choose the International Baccalaureate Program are required to take advanced courses in English, math, a world language, science, and social studies during their junior and senior years. They also must write a 4,000-word Extended Essay and be intentional in and reflective of their school and community service and their own physical activity over the two-year period. Additionally, they must take and pass the IB exams in each content area. Students' college credit depends upon their test scores and the policy of the college they will attend; IB diploma recipients are guaranteed 24 hours of college credit at a Texas public university. More information is available through the school counselor

and on the district's web site.

For maximum success in the IB program, it is suggested that students begin participating in Advanced Academics courses at the earliest opportunity.

Educators who teach in the Secondary Gifted and Talented program are trained in the advanced curricula and in gifted and talented education.

## **GIFTED/TALENTED PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Identification of gifted and talented students in the Hurst-Euless-Bedford schools begins in kindergarten and is continually ongoing through grade 12, using multiple criteria to assess general intellectual ability. Students participate in the gifted and talented program only with signed parent permission, and once identified for the program, may continue in the program through graduation without further re-identification at any grade level. Students may be referred for the program at any time, by teachers, parents, counselors, administrators, or self-referral.

### **STEPS CURRICULUM OVERVIEW GRADES K, 1, 2, 3**

- Identified students cluster-grouped in classes with STEPS teacher (G/T endorsed or specifically trained in G/T education) on each campus
- Introduction to G/T strategies for critical and creative thinking
- Introduction to research, group and independent investigation
- Introduction to logical and analytical problem-solving strategies
- Open-ended activities with emphasis on higher-order thinking
- Introduction to computer keyboarding and applications
- Communication and presentation skills

STEPS students will be clustered together and the teacher(s) designated for STEPS will provide differentiated experiences where possible and appropriate in the regular classroom setting. They may also experience one of the following program options, depending on the campus:

- Identified students may be served on a consistent basis as part of a group of primary advanced learners pulled out for accelerated reading or math instruction.
- The Advanced Academics Specialist may pull the child out of the regular classroom on a consistent basis for specialized strategies designed for advanced learners.
- Students may experience lessons designed specifically for advanced learners in K-3.
- Students may be involved in independent research projects including but not limited to the projects created by the Texas Education Agency for the Texas State Performance Standards. Parents may access these projects and work with their identified gifted student at home with the activities which are designed for advanced learners. The projects may be accessed at [www.texaspsp.org](http://www.texaspsp.org).

## **GRADES 4 and 5 (PEAK)**

- Identified students meet in PEAK English-Language Arts class for at 100 minutes each day with the Advanced Academics Specialist who has specialized training, often including graduate hours, in gifted education.
- Development of proficiency in G/T learning models, strategies for critical and creative thinking
- Development of research, investigation skills
- Development of communication, presentation skills
- Collaboration and problem-solving strategies and vocabulary study
- Differentiated instruction through thematic units in the four core academic areas - language arts, math, science and social studies
- Computer and technology applications

## **GRADE 6**

- Identified GT students are served alongside high-achieving Advanced Academics students.
- Differentiated instruction offered in two core academic areas through Advanced Academics classes in language arts and math.
- Continued development of collaboration, problem-solving strategies, and leadership skills
- Continued development of research, investigation skills
- Continued development of communication, presentation skills

## **GRADES 7-12 (Advanced Academics Program)**

- Continued application of G/T learning models, critical and creative thinking strategies through a specialized AP/IB/GT English Language Arts class specifically for identified GT students (student's schedule permitting).
- Differentiated instruction offered in the four core academic areas through Advanced Academics or AP/IB classes in language arts, math, science and social studies
- Advanced research projects, independent and group investigations
- Advanced and accelerated studies in the humanities, communication skills
- Continued development of collaboration, leadership skills
- Forum for analysis, synthesis, evaluation, debate of thematic issues
- Preparation for International Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, and college-entrance exams

## **Identification Criteria and Procedures**

Identification of academically gifted students is a comprehensive and ongoing process which begins with the second semester of kindergarten. In accordance with the Texas State Guidelines for Gifted-Talented Education, multiple criteria are used to identify gifted learners, and these are reviewed by campus committees (all of whom are trained) consisting of the principal or assistant principal, counselor, and teacher or teachers, including a GT Specialist. By state law and Texas Education Agency guidelines, no single criterion may be the basis for identification, nor may any single person make placement decisions. The following five criteria are used in Hurst-Eules-Bedford schools for GT placement:

1. Classroom observation by teacher(s)
2. Evaluation of student products
3. Observation and evaluation by parents
4. Student self-assessment and evaluation
5. Standardized aptitude and achievements tests using both verbal/non-verbal measures

All criteria are weighed equally in making identification recommendations; students whose performance on a majority of the criteria within the upper 2-5% range (superior or very superior) are identified. Students are not denied placement in the gifted and talented program because of poor classroom behavior or performance, as grades and classroom behavior are not always accurate reflections of intellectual ability; nor should students be recommended solely on the basis of good grades or good behavior without supporting indication of exceptionality based on the data collected. Recommendation for gifted services shall reflect the best professional judgment of the identification committee. The campus committee will consider the following when making this recommendation:

- Evidence of the student's exceptionality (in the range of two standard deviations from the norm) and need for differentiated educational experiences offered through the GT program;
- The degree to which the student will, in the opinion of the committee, benefit from participation in a gifted program.

### **Identification in Grades K-3 (STEPS)**

Because of the emerging nature of characteristics by which giftedness is determined in very young children, all students in grades K-3 are considered and are included in some screening activities. These include a series of planned classroom experiences designed to elicit gifted behaviors and formal observation of each student by the teacher who has been trained in looking for characteristics of advanced learners. Students whose performance on either of these measures indicates possible giftedness are then administered, with parent permission, a standardized aptitude and/or achievement test and a student self-evaluation inventory, and parents are requested to complete an evaluation inventory. All of this data is reviewed by the campus committee who will make placement recommendations. Students who qualify are recommended for placement in STEPS, and the school counselor will notify parents. Students must have signed parent permission to participate in the STEPS program.

## **Identification for GT, Grades 4-12**

All students who have been identified as gifted in HEB ISD and who are in STEPS in grade 3 may continue without re-identification into the PEAK program in grade 4, and may continue to remain in the gifted program through grade 12 unless exiting the program (*see Exit Procedures*). Students who have not previously been identified, including students new to HEB schools, may be referred for assessment by teachers, parents, administrators, or may self-refer. Identification for the program includes collection of data to meet the five criteria for GT placement. This data, collected by the school counselor, is reviewed by the campus committee, and parents will be notified of the committee's recommendation. Students who qualify based on performance on at least three of the five criteria in the upper 2-5% range on national norms, are referred for the GT program. Students must exhibit scores in the upper 2-5% in either aptitude or achievement measures in order to be identified. Students must have signed parent permission to participate.

New students to HEB ISD who have been identified as gifted in another district are automatically considered for placement in the gifted and talented program but must meet the HEB ISD criteria to be eligible for the program. This is to ensure appropriate placement, as local service models and identification criteria vary from district to district.

## **Highly Capable Identification, Grades K-5**

Students who do not qualify for the gifted program after extensive screening and testing but who score in the highly qualified range in at least 4 indicators are identified as Highly Capable (High-C). The Highly Capable program identifies those advanced students who need differentiated strategies because they show great potential when it comes to the GT identification instrument. Parent permission must be obtained before placing a student in the Highly Capable program. Highly Capable students are served alongside the gifted students depending on the staffing and numbers on each campus. The ultimate goal for these students is to be moved into GT identification by grade 6 as long as they are able to meet district criteria. Many Highly Capable students, after being consistently exposed to GT strategies, skills, and curriculum, are re-evaluated and may be identified as GT. Highly Capable students are re-evaluated on a regular basis to ensure their qualifications for remaining in the Highly Capable program. Parents may request removal from the Highly Capable designation should the student struggle with the placement. The Highly Capable designation does not continue past elementary school. The junior high and high schools have Advanced Academics and AP/IB courses for students who are highly advanced but not necessarily identified as gifted.

## **Exit Procedures (STEPS, PEAK)**

Students who wish to exit the program (STEPS or PEAK) may do so through a formal exit procedure consisting of parent notification and parent-student conference with a campus exit committee composed of the STEPS or PEAK teacher, counselor, and an administrator (principal, assistant principal, or district coordinator). Reasons for exit may include personal or social stresses which prevent self-satisfying student performance. Poor performance in STEPS or PEAK or in the regular education program is not, in itself, sufficient cause for exit from the program, but may be an indicator of problems which may lead to an exit. By state law and TEA guidelines, no single criterion such as grades or conduct may be used to remove a student from the gifted program. The Exit committee will review all information and make a decision based on educational, psychological, and/or personal reasons. The following should be considered:

- parent request for exit;
- student request for exit, with parent permission;
- counselor recommendation, based on interviews, observations, reviews of records including G/T folder;
- teacher recommendation, based on observation of student behavior, performance, physical changes, and products.

The Exit process may be initiated by the student, parent, teacher, or counselor for reasons listed above. The following steps will then be set in motion:

1. the STEPS or PEAK teacher will inform the principal of developments leading to possible exit;
2. a conference will be held with the student, STEPS or PEAK teacher, counselor and administrator;
3. a parent conference will be requested with the parent, STEPS or PEAK teacher, counselor, and administrator;
4. a campus level Exit Committee composed of the student, principal or assistant principal, STEPS or PEAK teacher, will meet to review the request for exit (district coordinator may be a participant at campus request) and to recommend exit or non-exit. The committee may also recommend probation or furlough with specific time frame established for either, before recommending exit.

**Probation:** A probationary period may be established for the student, with a specific time frame and performance standards agreed upon by the student, teacher, counselor, and principal. A major purpose of STEPS or PEAK is flexibility to meet the unique needs of the gifted student through appropriately differentiated learning experiences; alternative learning contracts may be considered between the student and teacher by which the student may meet or fulfill assignment requirements. Personal situations, emotional stress, and/or developmental difficulties, along with the student's unique abilities, should be considered in developing alternative learning contracts. During the probationary period, the student will remain in STEPS or PEAK. At the conclusion of the probationary period, the student may again be

considered for exit if the conditions of the probation have not been satisfied.

**Furlough:** In extenuating circumstances it may be determined to be in the student's best interests to remove the student from STEPS or PEAK for a year. This may be for reasons of illness, family or emotional problems, peer conflicts, or other problems which may be reasonably expected to be resolved within a period of time, after which the student wishes to continue in STEPS or PEAK. In unusual circumstances, the Exit Committee may vote to establish a furlough for a specific period of time other than a full year. This should be noted in the student's GT records. The student's class schedule may be changed if necessary to place the student in another class, and the student will not attend STEPS or PEAK class during the furlough period. At the specified end of the furlough period, the Exit Committee will again review the student's placement status, at which time the student should be returned to STEPS or PEAK or be formally exited. A student who has been placed on furlough does not have to requalify or reapply as long as he/she returns to the STEPS or PEAK class within the designated furlough period. Students may furlough only one time during K-8 except in special circumstances as deemed by the Exit Committee.

5. Upon recommending exit from STEPS or PEAK, the exit committee will complete the exit form with the reason for exit. Copies of the form will be filed appropriately as listed on the form.

6. Students may participate in STEPS or PEAK only with parent permission. A parental request for exit from STEPS or PEAK should initiate an exit conference, but parental request for student exit will be honored in any case. The purpose of formal exit procedures is to ensure that all parties are fully informed and the decision made is in the best interests of the student.

### **Secondary Exit Procedures**

As long as an identified GT student remains in at least one advanced academics class in grades 7-12, he/she may remain in the gifted program. In order to meet state guidelines giving GT students time with their gifted peers, a gifted English class is offered at each grade level, taught by a gifted specialist.

Student schedule permitting, identified GT students will *automatically* be placed in the GT English class unless:

- the student/parent initiates exit procedures;
- the GT English teacher recommends a more appropriate placement due to poor performance;
- the counselor must temporarily remove the student due to scheduling conflicts.

A student who wishes to exit the GT English class must obtain a form from his/her GT English teacher which will express that he/she waives the opportunity to be in a class designated for GT students. If the student is not taking at least one additional advanced academics class, he/she will be exited from the gifted program. Students who wish to re-enter the GT English class within two years of the exit date may complete a reinstatement form which requires the GT English teacher's permission. If the request is beyond two years

from the exit date, the student must see the counselor to reapply to the gifted program in order to be reinstated. Students who no longer meet the criteria for identification may be denied placement in the program.

### **Appeals of Placement or Exit Decisions for Secondary Gifted and Talented Program**

Parents or students who wish to appeal decisions of the campus committee concerning gifted and talented placement or exit should follow these procedures:

1. Contact the counselor or principal at the school to request a conference to express concerns regarding the decision. The purpose of this conference will be to review the criteria and the process by which the decision was made and to determine whether it is appropriate to reconvene the committee to review the case and whether it is necessary to collect additional information to review. This does not imply a reversal of the committee's decision.
2. If the appeal is not satisfied at the campus level, contact the district Advanced Academics Coordinator at Central Administration. The coordinator will review the data to determine that district procedures were appropriately followed and may request the committee to reconvene to review the decision or to collect additional information for review. This does not imply a reversal of the committee's decision. The Coordinator may participate as a member of the review committee, but may not override the committee's decision.
3. If still unsatisfied, the appeal may be made to the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. If the campus committee has not been reconvened or reconsidered the case, the Director may request that the campus committee reconvene and review the case or collect additional information for review. This does not imply a reversal of the committee's decision.

*At no time will any single individual make a decision to override the campus committee decision; this would be in violation of state law and TEA Guidelines, which stipulate that identification and exit decisions are a committee process. Review is based on the committee's proper consideration of criteria and observance of procedures in the identification or exit process.*

## General Characteristics of the Academically Gifted

A gifted individual may possess one or more of the following traits:

- is intellectually curious, innovative, playful with ideas
- enjoys challenge and involvement of intellectual and creative tasks
- has a keen, sometimes unique sense of humor
- is an independent thinker, seeks to act independently
- develops at an early age an inner control and satisfaction, which may lead to divergent and nonconformist behavior
- formulates abstractions while very young; moves easily from concrete to abstract levels of thinking and communicating
- prefers complex tasks and processes information in complex ways
- reads at early age, comprehends with advanced understanding
- reads widely and intensively in areas of special interest
- acquires basic skills rapidly and with minimum practice
- comprehends advanced ideas, concepts and implications
- has unusual ability to memorize
- is impatient with drill/details, which may result in gaps in basic skills
- explores wide-ranging and special interests not usually associated with others of the same age
- expends much energy and time in pursuing special interests; may be involved in numerous projects and activities of own choosing
- employs high intellectual and creative skills in assessing physical and social environment, solving problems and creating new products
- generates many ideas and multiple solutions to problems
- copes with environmental situations in resourceful and creative ways
- expresses ideas fluently, clearly, forcefully with words, numbers, creative products
- demonstrates richness of imagery in informal language, brainstorming
- has capacity for extraordinary leadership, tends to assume responsibility
- rebels against “irrelevant” learning requirements
- points out conflicting societal values, challenges authority
- becomes excited about new ideas, but may not always follow through
- creates and invents beyond parameters of knowledge in the field
- can improvise with commonplace materials
- has high expectations of self, others, which may lead to high levels of frustration with self, others, situations
- may prefer to be alone at least part of the time
- may have a sense of own uniqueness which leads to feelings of loneliness

*(from the “Blue Ribbon Committee Study and Report on Education of Gifted and Talented Youth,” Dr. Sandra Kaplan)*

## **From “Gifted 101: How do I support my child at home?”**

### **National Association for Gifted Children**

- Collect resources on your child's topics of interests, such as books, videos, and websites. Make time to talk to your child every day and encourage his/her active questioning. Find peers or groups who share similar interests.
- It can be easy to forget your child is just a child because he/she may be able to have adult conversations about advanced topics. Allow your child the freedoms or responsibilities appropriate for his/her individual emotional or social development.
- Gifted children are often highly observant and sensitive to social issues and fairness. Model the behavior and respect of others you expect of your child. Find opportunities for him/her to participate in acts of service that can make a difference.
- Provide challenge outside of school. Enrichment is incredibly beneficial whether it supplements school content or explores interests or passions. This could be in any area, whether that be through music, sports, or academic camps.
- Encourage your child to take risks. Celebrate mistakes as learning opportunities. When you make mistakes, model positive ways to problem-solve and grow.

### **Useful Resources for Parents**

Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented ([txgifted.org](http://txgifted.org))

Mensa ([usmensa.org](http://usmensa.org))

National Association for Gifted Children ([nagc.org](http://nagc.org))

Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted ([sengifted.org](http://sengifted.org))

The Mind Matters Podcast ([www.mindmatterspodcast.com](http://www.mindmatterspodcast.com))