



Gifted and Talented Handbook

August 2015 revision

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Should there be a need for a translation and/or a translator to explain any part of this handbook, please contact Venus ISD Administration at 972-366-3448.

Deba ha una necesidad para una traducción y/o el traductor de explicar cualquier parte de esta guía, por favor llame a la oficina de la Preparatoria Venus al 972-366-3448.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

I. Rationale for Gifted/Talented Curriculum Differentiation	3
II. State Definition of Gifted/Talented Students	3
III. Characteristics of Gifted/Talented Students	3
IV. District Philosophy of Gifted Education	4
V. Venus ISD Gifted/Talented Mission Statement and Goals	5

Gifted/Talented Program

VI. G/T Identification Process	7
VII. Curriculum and Instruction	12
VIII. Professional Development	14
IV. Community Awareness	14
X. Program Evaluation	14

Appendix

Handbook Acknowledgement Form

Venus Independent School District Gifted/Talented (G/T) Plan

Introduction

I. Rationale for Gifted and Talented Curriculum Differentiation

In 1977, the Texas Legislature passed legislation concerning the education of gifted students. State funds for providing services to gifted children and youth were made available in 1979, but school districts were given the local determination in providing services. In 1987, the legislature mandated that all school districts would identify and serve gifted students at all grade levels. In subsequent years the Texas Legislature adopted the Gifted and Talented state plan and created performance standards for G/T students.

II. State Definition of Gifted and Talented Students

A gifted and talented student is a child or youth who excels consistently or who shows the potential to excel 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 area;
- Possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- Excels in a specific academic field. (TEC §29.121)

III. Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Students

Although no two students are alike, G/T students as a group generally exhibit similar characteristics. Dr. Diane Heacox, in her book *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom*, identified a list of typical characteristics of gifted learners.

- High levels of retention with an extraordinary amount of information
- An accelerated pace of learning
- Advanced comprehension, deep understanding
- Usually varied interests and curiosity
- An advanced vocabulary
- Flexibility of thinking
- An ability to generate original ideas and solutions
- An ability to think in abstract terms and sense consequences
- Evaluative, judgmental thinking
- Persistent goal-directed behavior

The following chart by Janice Szabos, distinguishes “Bright Children” from “Gifted Learners.”

BRIGHT CHILD	GIFTED LEARNER
Knows the answers	Asks the questions
Is interested	Is highly curious
Is attentive	Is mentally and physically involved
Has good ideas	Has wild, silly ideas
Works hard	Plays around yet tests well
Answers the questions	Discusses in detail; elaborates
Top group	Beyond the top group
Listens with interest	Shows strong feelings and opinions
Learns with ease	Already knows
6-8 repetitions for mastery	Understands ideas
Understands ideas	Constructs abstractions
Enjoys peers	Prefers adults
Grasps the meaning	Draws inferences
Completes assignments	Initiates projects
Is receptive	Is intense
Copies accurately	Creates a new design
Absorbs information	Manipulates information
Technician	Inventor
Good memory	Good guesser
Is alert	Is keenly observant
Is pleased with own learning	Is highly self-critical
Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentations	Thrives on complexity

IV. District Philosophy Regarding Gifted Education

The Venus Independent School District is committed to providing each student the opportunity to develop to his/her full potential. Through this commitment, Venus ISD acknowledges the special needs of the gifted and talented students in our district.

Venus Independent School District believes that gifted students need a qualitatively differentiated program that provides time for work with other gifted students, time for further development of leadership abilities, and time for work on creative self-directed projects. Venus ISD is dedicated to providing programs that support and challenge students in the acquisition of skills necessary to become intellectually and creatively productive adults--capable of making significant contribution to the community, state, and nation.

V. Venus ISD Gifted / Talented Program Mission Statement and Goals

Mission Statement

To provide a differentiated, research-based curriculum that supports and challenges each identified Gifted / Talented student to reach their maximum potential.

Goals and Objectives 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 performances that reflect individuality and creativity; **and** are advanced in relation to students of similar age, experience, or environment. These students are found in all races, socio-economic groups, geographical locales, and environments.

Long-range goals and supporting objectives for students enrolled in the **Gifted and Talented (G/T)** program reflect the expectation that, over time, students will demonstrate mastery of the identified skills and abilities.

- 1) *The student will develop abilities to effectively use a variety of higher cognitive thinking processes suited to given situations by:*
 - a) formulating concepts which include enumerating, identifying common properties, labeling, and categorizing;
 - b) interpreting data which includes identifying relevant information, inferring (i.e., cause and effect relationships, forming generalizations derived from inferences), and identifying the reasoning involved in each process;
 - c) verifying, while identifying the reasoning involved in each process;
 - d) recognizing that learning is a complex, interactive process between the learner and the environment;
 - e) explaining the interdisciplinary relationships between systems of thought;
 - f) demonstrating the ability to use advanced thinking while acquiring, analyzing, and generating new information and knowledge;
 - g) developing needed skills to assure basic knowledge and comprehension.

- 2) *The student will develop abilities to conduct advanced levels of research in areas of interest and to communicate the results in appropriate modes of expression by planning an original product which requires choosing the following:*
 - a) an area of interest,
 - b) a researchable topic/problem,
 - c) a suitable form for the product,
 - d) an appropriate audience,
 - e) a fitting method of communication (presentation).

- 3) *The student will develop abilities to recognize and solve, real, meaningful problems by planning and completing investigative studies that result in creative and appropriate solutions by:*
- a) identifying and utilizing a variety of appropriate resources;
 - b) managing time, establishing and meeting deadlines by:
 - i) setting goals,
 - ii) deciding on a plan of action, adjusting as necessary,
 - iii) demonstrating task commitment by:
 - (1) initiating activities relevant to task,
 - (2) using time appropriately,
 - (3) progressing steadily toward completion of tasks,
 - (4) accepting setbacks as part of the learning process;
 - c) developing and communicating a product which requires:
 - i) organizing content and materials;
 - ii) developing requisite skills to assure quality;
 - iii) reflecting a freshness and originality in some part of the total process;
 - iv) developing a respect for the integrity of another's original work;
 - v) over a period of time, utilizing a variety of materials and developing different product forms.
- 4) *The student will develop abilities to understand and to cope with their special talents and to successfully interact with other students both in and out of the program by:*
- a) accepting the uniqueness of individuals and groups;
 - b) assert personal needs and feelings non-defensively and share these with others for self-clarification;
 - c) clarifying personal priorities among conflicting values both individually and in groups and accepting responsibility for own behavior when interacting with others;
 - d) working with a variety of groups such as:
 - i) intellectual peers,
 - ii) others with diverse talents and abilities,
 - iii) different cultural and ethnic groups,
 - iv) diverse social and economic groups;
 - e) use of thinking skills in isolation and in conjunction with problem solving and decision making in content areas;
 - f) use of both inductive and deductive models of inquiry.
- 5) *The students will develop an understanding of their unique potentials as leaders and contributors to society by:*
- a) planning personal growth socially/emotionally, physically, intuitively, and intellectually;
 - b) initiating self-directed activities relevant to task;
 - c) translating personal values and commitment into action in daily life;
 - d) demonstrating self-esteem and mature emotional development;
 - e) recognizing the complexity of problems facing society and identify themselves as a contributing member of society;

- f) recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses
- g) recognizing personal abilities and talents and demonstrating a sense of responsibility to use those talents so that their gifted potential will be realized;
- h) extensive use of high-level thinking skills, as defined by educational theorists such as Bloom or Bruner;
- i) use of activities containing a broad range of research skills including a number of diverse sources of information appropriate to the grade level.

VI. G/T Identification Process

District Selection and Review Committee

The district gifted/talented committee shall consist of the following persons:

- District G/T Coordinator
- Elementary Counselor
- Elementary Administrator
- Secondary Counselor
- Secondary Administrator

The duties of this committee will be to:

- Review screenings for G/T placement
- Review students for furlough status
- Exit students from program

A. Nomination

Students may be nominated for the gifted and talented program at any time by teachers, counselors, parents, or other interested persons. [VISD Board Policy EHBB (Local)].

The nomination process is ongoing and may be initiated by teachers, counselors, principals, parents, students (at the high school level), and community members. Supporting documentation must meet or exceed those qualifying criteria as set forth by the VISD G/T Program. Students new to the district may be nominated upon entry.

Nomination procedures and forms for assessment of gifted and talented students are communicated in a form and a language that the families can understand, or a translator or interpreter is provided. **A copy of the appropriate nomination forms may be obtained in the counselor's office at each campus or from the District G/T Coordinator.** G/T program awareness and overview sessions of the assessment procedures and services are conducted for families and faculties prior to the nomination period. Parents are afforded an opportunity for an individual parent/teacher conference prior to the referral to the G/T program.

B. Identification Procedures

The Board-approved program for the gifted and talented shall establish criteria to identify gifted and talented students. 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. (*VISD Board Policy EHBB Local*).

Kindergarten through eleventh grade VISD students are identified for the VISD G/T Program in intellectual and academic areas.

C. Screening Phase

Nomination of students occurs at any time. Additional information is collected on the nominated students during the established screening and identification phase:

- 1) Kindergarten screened in January/February
- 2) Grades 1 – 11, screened/identified at the end of each year
- 3) Transfer G/T Students, All grades – Screened within six weeks of enrollment

Criteria used for screening students are composed of both quantitative and qualitative data, which may include, but not limited to:

- Teacher survey
- Parent survey
- Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT)
- Stanford Achievement Test (SAT10)/SAT10 Aprenda for bilingual
- Creativity assessment

The gifted and talented coordinators will be responsible for gathering the necessary data needed to screen the nominated students. Students will be eligible for G/T screening once per school year.

Written permission of the parents and/or guardian will be secured for any special testing needed for the assessment or selection purposes. A matrix profile will be initiated during the screening process. The profile results will be evaluated by the District Selection and Review Committee.

D. Student Information Matrix

The District Selection and Review Committee will review the student information matrix using the data collected in the screening phase. An established minimum/maximum score of 3/5 for grades K-11 is required for entry to the program.

This matrix will be utilized in considering students for final selection and placement in the gifted/talented program. Final selection of students for the Gifted and Talented program will be made by of the District Selection and Review Committee.

E. Selection/Placement Procedures

The District Selection and Review 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 at each campus (VISD Board Policy EHBB Local).

Based on a review of information gathered during the assessment process, the District Selection and Review Committee recommends placement for students whose data reflect that program placement is the most appropriate educational setting. **All student information profiles for grades K-12 must be reviewed and signed by the District Selection and Review Committee prior to proceeding to the VISD District Assistant Superintendent.**

The District Selection and Review Committee may request additional data on students, should more data be needed in determining program placement decisions. Additional data requests may include any combination of the following:

- Additional portfolio work
- Anecdotal records from the teacher, parent, etc.
- Letters from the teacher, parent, principal, and/or others documentation supporting a decision for placement in the program.

These options for obtaining additional data may be utilized by the District G/T Coordinator and/or the District Selection and Review Committee in making program placement decisions on students who fail to meet or exceed established district criteria. VISD feels strongly that the District Selection and Review Committee must be afforded the flexibility outlined above if it is to guarantee program identification equity to all VISD students. These procedures assure that all district populations have access to assessment and, if identified, services offered as part of the program for gifted students.

Once identified for the gifted program, documentation verifying selection will be placed in the student's permanent folder. A review may be initiated for reasons of inability to maintain satisfactory progress.

Provision will be made to assure the fair screening and assessment of students with special needs such as the culturally diverse, the economically disadvantaged, and the disabled.

F. Notification

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

Parents and students will be notified of the committee's decision by letter. Parents of student in Kindergarten will be notified by March 1 and students in grades 1-11 will be notified by June 30.

G. Transfer

When a student identified as a gifted student by 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 and talented students is appropriate.

The committee shall make its determination within 30 school days of the student's enrollment in the District and shall base its decision on the transferred records, observation reports of District teachers who instruct the student, and student and parent conferences. (VISD Board Policy EHBB Local)

The transferring student's placement data will be evaluated using the district criteria for the gifted and talented program to determine placement. Parents have the right to consent to placement or refuse to place their child in the program. When a gifted and talented student withdraws and transfers to another district, the receiving district may request a copy of the student profile that includes information on the student's assessment data.

H. 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 student 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 (VISD Board Policy EHBB Local).

A furlough is an authorized leave of absence from the G/T program. Parent initiated furlough requests will be considered by the VISD District Selection and Placement Review Committee. Unsatisfactory performance, which may include academic failure,

of students in the G/T program may also result in a furlough review. Parents may withdraw a student from the gifted and talented program at any time, but withdrawals, other than furlough requests, will be considered as formal exits from the program. If students are exited by parents/guardians for reasons other than unsatisfactory performance and the parent/guardian(s) request re-entry, the student(s) will be reassessed and must meet gifted and talented criteria for re-entry. Furloughs may not exceed one school year.

To request a furlough:

1. Parents and/or students should notify the G/T campus coordinator on the student's campus of the request for a furlough.
2. A conference should be arranged to discuss the request.
3. After the conference, a written request for the furlough should be made on the appropriate form and forwarded to the District G/T Coordinator.
4. The District Selection and Review Committee will consider the request at the earliest possible time.

I. Review/Exit Process

Student performance in the program shall be monitored. A student shall be removed from the program at any time the District Selection and Review Committee determines it is in the student's best interest. If a student or parent requests removal from the program, the District Selection and Review Committee shall meet with the parent and student before honoring the request (VISD Board Policy EHBB Local).

Student progress in the program is subject to review at any time. The review is conducted by a committee of involved teachers, parents/guardians, administrators, and the student. Multiple student data is subject to review including academic performance, attendance, and discipline records. A consensus of the review is documented, signed by all present, and placed in the student's permanent folder. At the time student progress is assessed, the student may continue in the appropriate G/T program or be recommended for exit from the G/T program.

A recommendation for exit may be submitted by the classroom teacher, the G/T campus coordinator, or the parents/guardians to the District G/T Coordinator. A student may be exited due to educational, psychological, and/or personal reasons.

The parent/guardian may exit a child at any time. If students are exited by parents/guardians for any reasons other than unsatisfactory performance and the parents/guardians request re-entry, the student(s) will be reassessed and must meet gifted and talented criteria for re-entry.

When exit procedures are initiated by a teacher, a conference must be held with the parent/guardian concerning the reasons for the exit referral. Final exit decisions will be made by the District Selection and Review Committee. The following steps outline the

exit procedure:

1. G/T coordinator conducts a conference with the student and parent/guardian to design a plan of action for assisting the student in the G/T program.
2. Support services and the intervention plan are implemented.
3. At least one six-weeks of time is given to see if the support services and intervention plan are helpful.
4. A conference is held with the student and parent/guardian, and exit is recommended if no improvement is noted.
5. The name and documentation to support exit from the program is sent to the District Selection and Review committee.
6. Students may be exited from the program or be placed on furlough.

An exit form will be completed and placed in the student's permanent folder. A copy will be sent to the appropriate teachers, VISD staff, and parents.

J. Appeal

Parents or 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 the FNG (Local) beginning at Level Two (VISD Board Policy EHBB Local).

Appeals regarding the placement of a student in the Gifted/Talented program may be submitted to the District Selection and Review Committee by district personnel or parents/guardians. Additional data on students may be requested and may include:

- Additional academic work
- Anecdotal records from the teacher, parent, principal, and/or others
- Letters from the teacher, parent, principal, and/or others supporting a decision for placement in the program

Any appeal beyond the district review committee should follow the standard VISD appeal process (FNG Local).

VII. Curriculum and Instruction

Elementary (K-5)

Identified students in Kindergarten through fifth grade are placed in a teacher's classroom where a differentiated, compacted curriculum in the core academic areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies as appropriate is provided. Opportunities to participate in activities for creative expression and leadership are also provided. Student developed portfolio provide evidences of the incorporation of specific G/T strategies in the subject area instruction. *The VISD District G/T Coordinator*

may assist the classroom teachers with developing a differentiated, compacted curriculum.

In addition, identified G/T students spend time each week in an enrichment pullout class to work with like ability students on appropriate enrichment replacement activities. These classes may be composed of identified G/T students of different grade levels.

In the event that the identified students speak a language other than English and no teachers who speak the students' primary language are available with the required 30 hours of G/T training, the VISD G/T campus coordinator, in conjunction with the VISD Bilingual/ESL teacher specialist, will assist the regular classroom teacher in developing an accelerated, differentiated curriculum that addresses the individual needs of the identified student(s).

Secondary (6-12)

G/T students are served by identified G/T teachers in Honors classes reflecting their individual subject-matter aptitudes. A differentiated, compacted, and, when appropriate, accelerated curriculum is provided in the core academic areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies. The curriculum evidences the incorporation of specific G/T strategies. Opportunities to participate in activities for creative expression and leadership are also provided. *The VISD District G/T Coordinator may assist the classroom teachers with developing a differentiated, compacted curriculum.*

Identified G/T students are encouraged to enroll in Honors, Dual Credit, and Independent Study classes, however this is not a requirement. In addition, identified G/T students spend time each week in an enrichment pullout class to work with like ability students on appropriate enrichment replacement activities. These classes may be composed of identified G/T students of different grade levels.

Placement

All school G/T students are placed in heterogeneously grouped classrooms with teachers who have completed at least 30 hours of G/T training.

Staffing

Identified G/T teachers must have a minimum of 30 hours of G/T training. Once the 30 hours of training is completed, teachers must receive a minimum of 6 hours annually of Professional Development in Gifted and Talented training. Maintaining current records and providing documentation of training are the responsibility of the identified G/T teacher.

VIII. Professional Development

The primary goal of the VISD Gifted and Talented Staff Development is to provide all professional staff with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to provide a differentiated curriculum through a variety of instructional strategies in the classroom setting.

Staff development will be implemented in the following areas:

- A) All staff will receive staff development in:
 - 1) procedures used for identifying students for the VISD Gifted / Talented program,
 - 2) the VISD Gifted / Talented program overview, and
 - 3) the nature and needs of the gifted student.

- B) G/T teachers will receive professional development related to their assignment as required by state mandates and local requirements:
 - 1) State Mandate – teachers entering the program will be required to acquire thirty (30) hours of G/T training. If the teacher has three hours or more hours of college credit toward the G/T certification, the thirty hours is not required.
 - 2) State Mandate – Teachers who have previously met the state mandate for training will be required annually to attend six hours of advanced G/T training.
 - 3) Representatives from each campus are encouraged to attend annual G/T conferences.

- C) Counselors and principals will receive 6 hours of professional development that includes the nature and needs of gifted and talented students and program options for G/T students.

IV. 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 and understanding of and support for the program (VISD Board Policy EHBB Local).

Parents and community members will be informed of programs for the Gifted/Talented Program. They will be kept informed of district needs for the program and legislation related to the gifted. Parents and community members will be actively involved by serving on planning and evaluation committees. Involvement will also include nomination of students for program participation. Community awareness may be developed by setting up displays of student's work in public places. Program information will also be relayed through correspondence, news releases, presentations to organizations, and reports to the school board. Parents will be given the opportunity to complete program evaluation surveys each year and also attend an annual parent meeting.

Parents of G/T students will receive information about program development, student's products and achievements, and how parents can make contributions to the program.

Parents will be informed in writing of the selection and may either confirm or decline the child's placement into the G/T program.

X. 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.

The general purpose of evaluation is to gather, analyze, and disseminate information, which can be used to make decisions concerning the Gifted/Talented Program. A formative and summative evaluation design will be utilized to determine if the goals and objectives of the Venus Independent School District Gifted/Talented Program are met.

Aspects such as program organization and curriculum development, management of resources and personnel, and parental/community involvement will be addressed in the evaluation process.

Information derived from the evaluation process will be utilized to plan for effective and efficient delivery of services to the Gifted / Talented students.

Formative evaluation – provides feedback while the program is in progress, in order to make modifications as necessary.

Summative evaluation – provides overall information of the program's impact and effectiveness.

Venus ISD will evaluate the following facets of implementation through school, staff, and parents.

- Student assessment
- Program design
- Curriculum and instruction
- Parent evaluation/involvement

Appendix

VENUS ISD GIFTED AND TALENTED HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

Student's Name (Last)

(First)

(Middle)

Campus

Grade

As the parent / guardian of the above named student, I acknowledge that my signature below indicates my receipt of the Venus ISD Board adopted Gifted and Talented Handbook. I also certify that I will become familiar with the rules, procedures and policies outlined in this Handbook.

If I have a need for a copy of this Handbook in my native language and/or a translator to explain any parts of these policies, these will be provided upon request to the campus principal.

If you need further information and/or explanation about the Venus ISD Gifted and Talented Program, please call the campus principal, counselor, and/or G/T teacher specialist.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Please detach this form and return with signature to the campus principal.

Venus ISD is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate with regard to race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, marital or veteran status, the presence of a medical condition, disability, or any other legally protected status.