



# ENNIS ISD

## Gifted and Talented Education Handbook

2024 / 2025

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## Preface

This handbook presents the official policies, processes, and procedures for organizing, operating, and evaluating the Ennis Independent School District's program for the academically talented students. This program is to be known as the GATE Program.

Copies of all forms used to implement and maintain the program are on file in the Curriculum and Instruction Department office.

This handbook is intended to be used as a working guide for the GATE Program. Any element is subject to change in State/Federal guidelines, or recommendations of the Advisory Committee with the approval of the Superintendent and School Board the Advisory Committee with the approval of the Superintendent and School Board.

## State Definition

§29.121. Definition.

In this subchapter, "gifted and talented students" 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.

## Philosophy/Rationale

The philosophy of the Ennis Independent School District reflects an understanding of the uniqueness of individual students. Because the learning characteristics of gifted and talented students dictate learning experiences that differentiate from those provided for them in the regular school program, the district recognizes that special provisions must be made for these students in order to stimulate and maximize their achievement.

The Ennis Independent School District recognizes that gifted and talented students are found in all cultures, socioeconomic groups, and environments. Ennis ISD will serve the needs of those students who demonstrate above average achievement or potential in the areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies, as identified through multiple and specific criteria.



## Program Goals

- The GATE program is to assist academically talented students to reach, through enrichment, the upper levels of achievement. The purpose is to accelerate students in the content area and to increase extension and abstraction in the existing programs of instruction.
- Students in the program will develop to a greater degree their critical and creative thinking skills and apply them in solving problems and creating advanced products.
- Students in the program will reinforce their self-directed learning skills through investigating advanced, more complex subject matter to help them become independent, life-long learners and creative producers.
- Students in the program will develop a more positive self-concept so that they can interact more effectively with peers, adults, and society.

## Program Objectives

- Assure all students equal opportunities to be screened, identified, and placed in the GATE program.
- Utilize a differentiated program, which will meet the diversified needs of identified students.
- Provide a learning environment and experiences, which will enable students to develop skills in higher orders of intellectual activity.
- Nurture creativity and flexibility.
- Develop the skills for initiating, planning, and conducting independent research.
- Utilize the cultural, instructional, natural, and industrial resources of the region.
- Provide opportunity for academically talented students to associate with and share ideas with peers of similar intellectual abilities.

# Section 1: Fidelity of Services

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## EISD Program Prototype

Ennis ISD offers a variety of learning experiences and opportunities for gifted and talented students in grades K-12 which meet the mandates of the Texas Administrative Code. These services include, but are not limited to, integrating depth and complexity into the curriculum, requiring advanced level products and performances, and allowing identified gifted and talented students the opportunity to work with other identified students.

A student's enrollment in the GATE Program will not supplant his/her enrollment in the regular language arts, math, science, and social studies program.

- Kindergarten students will receive differentiated instruction within the regular classroom setting.
- Identified students in grades 1-5 will receive services through a cluster program with specific emphasis on the student's identified area of strength.
- Identified students in grades 6-12 will be taught by specially trained teachers in the areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies.

## Curriculum

Curriculum consists of the content to be learned and the processes, which make learning possible. Curriculum for the academically talented must be differentiated from that in the regular classroom and congruent with the characteristics of gifted children. Documentation of student mastery of the state curriculum is mandated by state rules relating to curriculum. The curriculum for the GATE Program will be based on the following guidelines.

- Individual needs, abilities, and interests will be a consideration in planning learning activities.
- Learning activities will emphasize the development of thinking skills rather than mere accumulation of knowledge.
- Oral and written communication skills will be developed.
- Learning activities will emphasize the learner as a producer of information.
- The curriculum will facilitate the development of the higher order thinking processes, including analysis and evaluation.

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- Divergent and creative thinking skills will be developed including fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality.
- Activities will focus on the active involvement of the learner.
- Activities will be designed to develop self-directed and independent learning skills.
- Problem solving skills including investigating and exploring real problems will be developed.
- The curriculum will facilitate the development of an understanding of a student's capabilities and responsibilities, including the development of a healthy self-concept and relationship with peers.
- Means of differentiating the curriculum may include:
  - Accelerated or advanced content
  - Complexity of content which requires higher-level thinking
  - Introduction of content beyond basic curriculum
  - Student selected content and activities according to interest and abilities
  - Use of higher-level responses
  - Use of multiple and varied resources including technology

## Parental and Community Involvement

Education for the academically talented requires a strong partnership between parents and teachers and cooperation with the community. The EISD GATE Program will promote the active involvement and support of parents and community through the following:

- Parent and community members will continue to have input in program organization through parent and community representatives who will serve on the advisory committee.
- A parent awareness meeting will be conducted annually prior to the start of the referral process.
- Parents and community members will participate in the identification process by being allowed and encouraged to refer prospective students for the program.

# Section 1: Fidelity of Services

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- Parents and community leaders will be invited to serve as resources for the program.
- Parents and community leaders will be invited to visit the GATE classes.
- Community awareness will be developed by setting up displays of students' work in public places such as the library.
- Information concerning the program will be relayed through correspondence, news releases, presentations to community clubs and organizations, parent-teacher organizations, and reports to the board of trustees.
- Parents will be given the opportunity to complete a program evaluation survey each year.

## Program Evaluation and Growth

Ennis ISD's Gifted and Talented Education Program's policies and procedures are reviewed annually by the Advisory Committee. Ongoing program evaluations are conducted and reviewed using data collected from students, teachers, parents, counselors, and principals to assess the success in achieving the program goals and objectives. This data is used to improve and develop the program in the manner that best serves the needs of the gifted and talented students in the district. Revision of the program will be based on the following:

- Changes in state/federal guidelines
- Recommended changes originating at any level and presented in writing to and approved by the program coordinators.

After review by the Advisory Committee, recommendations must then be approved by the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees.



## Identification Process

Identification and selection of students for the GATE Program must be determined through a comprehensive process consisting of three steps:

1. **REFERRAL:** Involves the collection of information pertaining to student abilities, potential, performance, or past records
2. **SCREENING:** The process designed to identify students in need of gifted and talented services
3. **SELECTION:** Involves consideration of each referred and screened student and the placement of those students who match (meet) the criteria for the program

The Kindergarten referral/screening/selection process will be conducted each spring semester with placement and services implemented as specified by TEA guidelines.

## Guidelines for Referral

Referrals may be obtained from a person(s) familiar with the student's abilities, potential, performance, or past records and may include the following:

1. Parent
2. Peers
3. Teacher/Administrators
4. Counselor
5. Librarian
6. Community member

The Curriculum and Instruction Department, assisted by the building principal, counselor(s), and teaching staff will be responsible for disseminating and collecting the referral forms. A list of all referrals will be maintained by the Curriculum and Instruction Department and considered by the placement committee.





## Guidelines for Screening

UNIVERSAL SCREENING - Each spring, all kindergarten and 2nd grade students participate in a universal cognitive abilities screener. This screener provides a cognitive snapshot of individual learners and their non-verbal and verbal reasoning abilities and is used as a measure for identifying students who might otherwise fail to be referred.

SCREENING OF REFERRED STUDENTS - Referred students will be screened using:

1. Standardized Achievement Test
  2. Cognitive Abilities Test
  3. Renzulli/Hartman Scale for Rating Behavioral Learning Characteristics of Superior Students - completed by the classroom teacher
- Identified students will continue to be served unless exit or furlough procedures are implemented.
  - Permission is secured from parents for special testing of students. This excludes the universal screening process that assesses all kindergarten and 2nd grade students.
  - Testing of students for the program will be conducted by qualified personnel.



## Guidelines for Placement

Placement is conducted by a committee consisting of the following members:

1. Curriculum and Instruction Department
2. Campus principal
3. Campus counselor

Review and evaluation of student data will be of a confidential nature. The placement committee will consider student performance and scores in multiple instruments to determine if a student shows a need for gifted and talented services.

Once placement has been determined, notification of student recommendation for participating in the GATE Program will be the responsibility of the Curriculum and Instruction Department. Principals and parents will receive written communication of placement recommendations. A copy of the matrix with assessment data will be kept in the student's cumulative file on the campus they attend.

## Guidelines for Appeals

Parental or teacher grievances regarding selection of students for the GATE Program must be submitted via the [GATE Appeal Form \(English & Spanish\)](#) within 10 business days of parent notification of the committee's initial decision. The Curriculum and Instruction Department will notify the selection committee. The committee will make arrangements for a conference with the person(s) submitting the grievance. If a consensus cannot be reached, an appeal may be made to the superintendent. For EISD grievance procedures, see Board Policy FNG (LOCAL).



### Guidelines for Transferring Students

Students transferring to Ennis Independent School District who have participated in a gifted and talented program in another school district will be exempt from the referral process. The decision for entry will be made within the first 30 calendar days and based on consideration of the following:

- Prior district's documentation of qualifying the student
- Past records of the student's achievement test scores in reading and math and past records of the student's cognitive abilities test
- Observation records of the EISD receiving teacher
- Student/parent conferences at the receiving campus

Students currently enrolled and students transferring into EISD during the school year who have not participated in a similar program may be referred in the spring semester of the current school year for consideration of entry into the program the following year. All referrals should be in writing and routed directly to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. (See Guidelines for Referrals section)

### Guidelines for Furlough from GATE

The selection committee may place a student on furlough from the GATE Program if the student is unable to maintain satisfactory progress. All furlough requests should be made [HERE](#). The purpose of the furlough would be to attain performance goals established by the committee. A furlough may also be requested by 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 will be reassessed, and the student may re-enter the gifted program, be removed from the program, or placed on another furlough.



### Guidelines for Exit from GATE

Requests for exiting from the GATE program must be made [here](#). The selection committee will then review the circumstances of the request in order to make a decision. The selection committee makes the final decision regarding exiting students from the program for educational, psychological, or personal reasons after consultation with both the student and parents. Consultation and decisions made will occur after multiple conferences between the parent and the teacher. Immediate action will be taken, should an emergency situation arise.

Decisions are based on the following:

1. Parental request for withdrawal from the program
2. Teacher recommendation based on observation of student performance, behavior, and products (Interventions are provided and multiple teacher/parent conferences will occur with documentation required)
3. Student request for withdrawal from the program with parental consent
4. Personal or social stresses which prevent a student from performing in a self-satisfying manner



# 11 Section 3: Staff & Training

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## Guidelines for Staff Development

- Days 1 and 2 of the GT Foundations 30 hour training will be presented during inservice annually. Participants will complete the remaining 18 hours online through the Region 10 ESC before the end of the first semester.
- A 6-hour annual update will be provided and will be based on the needs of the instructional staff relating to the special characteristics, needs, and services provided by Ennis ISD for GT students.
- Summer options will be available for instructional staff to complete the 6-hour update before returning to school for the fall semester.
- A staff awareness training will be scheduled for each campus prior to the start of the referral process annually.
- Staff members will be encouraged to attend professional conferences and workshops for the purpose of improving competencies in instructional strategies and program development.
- All teachers must meet the staff development requirements as specified by the Texas Education Agency. This includes the 30 hour foundations training and a subsequent annual 6 hour update.
- All counselors will attend a 6-hour training that includes nature and needs of GT students, service options for GT students, and social emotional learning for GT students and will participate in subsequent 6 hour annual updates.
- All administrators will attend a 6-hour training that includes the nature and needs of GT students, service options for GT students, and social emotional learning for GT students and will participate in subsequent 6-hour update every three years.
- Trustees will attend training to ensure program accountability based on the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students and are encouraged to pursue professional development on the Texas State Plan.



# Section 4: Contacts

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