

Alamo Heights Independent School District

HEIGHTS PROGRAM

Gifted Students:
Kindergarten – Fifth Grade

Parent Handbook



Updated: September 2016

Alamo Heights Independent School District

HEIGHTS PROGRAM

*Helping to
Enrich the
Intellectually
Gifted through
Higher level
Thinking
Skills*

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INTRODUCTION

The Alamo Heights Independent School District is committed to recognizing the unique talents, gifts, and abilities of its diverse student population and to providing an environment which maximizes intellectual development.

The Texas Education Code 29.121 defines a "gifted and talented student" as follows:

"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."

Gifted and talented students in Alamo Heights shall be defined as those students who have been identified through a specific screening and selection process in the areas of general intellectual ability or specific academic aptitude as evidenced by their performance on learning potential tests, achievement tests, classroom performance, and observed behaviors.

The program is designed to provide academically and intellectually gifted students with opportunities to enhance the "self" as a learner and as a producer. The curriculum is designed to assist in assessing and capitalizing upon the talents, interests, and needs of the gifted student. The emphasis of the program is on learning processes which will serve the student in meeting the challenges of life-long learning.

GOALS

The program for gifted students in kindergarten through fifth grade is called **HEIGHTS**, an acronym for **H**elping **E**nrich **I**ntellectually **G**ifted (through) **H**igher **L**evel **T**hinking **S**kills.

The HEIGHTS Program is designed to:

- Assist students in becoming self-directed learners.
- Provide students with a curriculum that is a blending of advanced content and thinking skills.
- Provide opportunities for students to work in interest areas.
- Encourage students to become creative producers.
- Assist students in developing a keener awareness of their own talents, a positive self-concept, and an appreciation of their value to self and to others.
- Provide opportunities for community service.

ADMITTANCE PROCEDURES

GT Consideration: All parents who want to have their children formally considered for the Alamo Heights ISD Gifted & Talented Program must follow campus procedures for initial evaluation. Outside testing will not be considered if your child has not gone through the formal process in place with AHISD.

Qualifications for K-5th Grade

- Students in Kindergarten are selected on the basis of:
 - 132 or above on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
 - Verbal
 - Quantitative
 - Nonverbal
 - A superior rating on behavioral characteristics checklist
 - Teacher
 - Parent

A student must meet at least 3 of the 5 above criteria to be admitted to the HEIGHTS program. Two of the five scores must be in the objective area, or the student must have a CogAT total of 132.

- Students in Grades 1 & 2 are selected on the basis of:
 - 132 or above on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
 - Verbal
 - Quantitative
 - Nonverbal
 - 98% or above on the Iowa Assessments
 - Reading
 - Math
 - A superior rating on behavioral characteristics checklist
 - Teacher
 - Parent

A student must meet at least 5 of the 7 above criteria to be admitted to the HEIGHTS program.

- Students in Grades 3, 4, 5 are selected on the basis of:
 - 132 or above on the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)
 - Verbal
 - Quantitative
 - Nonverbal
 - 98% or above on the Iowa Assessments
 - Reading
 - Math
 - A superior rating on behavioral characteristics checklist
 - A superior rating of 95 or above grade point average

A student must meet at least 5 of the 7 above criteria to be admitted to the HEIGHTS program.

Selection Committee K-5

A central screening committee composed of at least three professional educators who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students, will be appointed by the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education or her/his designee. The committee may be composed of:

- Principal
- Assistant principal
- Counselor
- Teacher from each of the elementary schools
- Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education
- HEIGHTS program teachers

This committee shall evaluate each nominated student according to the established criteria and shall select those students for whom gifted students program placement is the most appropriate educational setting.

REASSESSMENT

Students identified for the gifted/talented program in grades K-5 will remain in the program through fifth grade. During the fifth grade year, the district shall reassess students to determine appropriate program placement at the middle school level. Students must meet the program requirements to be eligible for placement in the secondary gifted/talented courses.

TRANSFER STUDENT POLICY

Students previously identified as gifted in another school district can be screened within two weeks of enrollment for possible placement in the HEIGHTS program, and they must meet the local criteria to be admitted.

APPEALS PROCESS

Parents, students, teachers, or counselors 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 local board policy. (Refer to EHBB Local.)

After reviewing the Student Summary Profile Sheet, if there are concerns about placement:

- Contact the G/T Department and request an appeal form.
- Complete and submit an appeal form within 15 days of selection committee notification.
- Selection committee will review the appeal and notify parents of decision.
- Parents must declare outside testing intent within 15 days of appeal decision. For current students outside testing results must be submitted by May 1st of current school year.

FURLOUGH/EXIT POLICY

The purpose of a furlough is to allow students to take a leave of absence from the program/course or to provide the student an opportunity to attain performance goals established for the program/course.

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 evaluated and the student may re-enter the gifted program/course, be removed from the program/course, or be placed on another furlough.

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 and support for the program.

PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

TIME ALLOCATIONS

A resource teacher trained in gifted education strategies meets with gifted students on a weekly basis as follows:

Kindergarten - 2 hours weekly

First and Second Grades - 2-3 hours weekly

Third, Fourth and Fifth Grades - One day a week

The teacher works with these small groups in the HEIGHTS classroom.

HEIGHTS OFFICE

Program Coordinator	Ann Veazey
Secretary	Lynette Casiano
Phone	210-832-5844

TEACHERS

Howard

Celine Bordelon

Julie Draper

Ann Veazey

Cambridge

Julie Draper

Betsy Hanzel

Ann Veazey

Woodridge

Celine Bordelon

Julie Draper

Karyl Hernandez

Carol Walters

STUDENT EVALUATION

An evaluation of student performance in HEIGHTS will be sent to the parents of students in grades 1-5 once yearly.

Student progress is documented by using a variety of methods that may include the following:

- student self-evaluations
- student and parent interviews or questionnaires
- teacher observations
- peer evaluations
- observations of student behavior
- attitude checklists
- student products
- community interviews or questionnaires
- comments or statements from mentors or experts in the area of student talent
- criterion-referenced tests
- standardized tests

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The gifted program shall be evaluated periodically, and evaluation information shall be shared with Board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and the community. The evaluation process shall ensure that those involved in the planning and implementation of the gifted program are also involved in its evaluation.

REGULAR CLASSROOM REQUIREMENTS

Classroom teachers and HEIGHTS teachers will maintain ongoing communication regarding the performance of gifted students in the regular classroom as well as in HEIGHTS.

1. HEIGHTS students will not make up classroom work that occurs while they are attending HEIGHTS. The classroom teacher will establish a process to insure that HEIGHTS students are aware of routine material covered in their absence and informed of any special assignments or projects which will need to be completed.
2. The HEIGHTS students are responsible for turning in homework due on their HEIGHTS day before going to the HEIGHTS class.
3. Long term assignments given by the classroom teacher will be due on or before the due date.
4. Efforts will be made by the classroom teacher to schedule major tests on days when HEIGHTS students are present. Special arrangements may be made with HEIGHTS teachers to assist in test administration if a conflict is unavoidable.

HELPING YOUR GIFTED CHILD

Although gifted children need guidance and understanding from their parents in terms of their special aptitudes and needs, they are still children with emotional, social and physical needs which are universal to childhood. You can assist your gifted child by:

- Showing genuine interest in, respect for, and unconditional acceptance of the child.
- Maintaining ongoing communication and involvement with an emphasis on actively spending time with the child.
- Allowing the child freedom or independence to explore, to take risks, and to think for him/herself.
- Encouraging the child to set his/her own goals.
- Helping the child recognize his/her individual strengths and weaknesses.
- Setting reasonable standards of behavior and seeing that the child understands and meets them.
- Avoiding the tendency to over schedule your child's time. Provide time to think, to daydream. No one performs at top capacity at all times.
- Helping the child develop self-discipline by facing the consequences of one's actions and decisions.
- Allowing him/her to experience failure as well as success, and to deal with both.
- Not accepting the complaint "I'm bored," but encouraging the child to assume responsibility for initiating constructive activity.
- Helping the child deal constructively with approval and disapproval of others.
- Recognizing the merits of each of your children, and avoiding a comparison between them.
- Avoiding the tendency to center on the child's "giftedness" as a source of overt pride, which generates the resentment and hostility of others.

CHECKLIST: ARE YOU A GIFTED PARENT?

1. Do you answer your child's questions with patience and good humor?
2. Do you take advantage of his/her questions and expressions of interest to guide him/her into further learning and explorations?
3. Do you help him/her develop physical and social skills as carefully as you encourage mental growth?
4. Do you help him/her learn how to get along with children of all levels of intelligence?
5. Do you avoid comparing him/her to brothers, sisters or companions?
6. Do you show him/her that he is loved for his own sake and not for his/her intellectual achievement?
7. Do you set reasonable standards of behavior for your child and then see that he/she meets them?
8. Do you provide early opportunities for decision making by your child, with follow-up of learning to evaluate decisions after carrying out whatever action was taken?
9. Do you try to find something specific to praise when he/she shows you his/her work? (A generalized compliment means little to gifted children.)
10. Do you help him/her find worthwhile and challenging reading materials and television programs?
11. Do you provide hobby materials and books?
12. Do you find places where he/she can study and work at his/her hobbies?
13. Do you provide a place to display his/her work?
14. Do you let him/her learn about and share in some of your hobbies and interests?
15. Do you take him/her on trips to points of interest?
16. Do you enable him/her to take advantage of lessons and activities offered by private groups or community organizations?
17. Do you teach him/her how to budget his/her time, organize his/her work, and improve his/her study habits?
18. Do you help him/her make his/her own plans and decisions?
19. Do you give him/her increasing independence as his/her ability to handle responsibility increases?
20. Do you give him/her household responsibilities and other tasks suitable to his/her age level?

(Excerpt from Newsletter of Gifted Children's Association of Orange County, CA.)