



**Onalaska ISD**  
**Gifted and Talented Handbook**  
**2024-2025**

**DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE**

*It is the policy of Onalaska ISD not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, or handicap in its vocational programs, services, or activities as required by the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.*

Revised June 26, 2024

# State Definition of Gifted and Talented

Gifted and Talented student means a child or youth who performs 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:

- 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)

## State Goal

Students who participate in services 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. High school graduates who have participated in services for gifted students will have produced products and performances of professional quality as part of their program services.

\*All students enrolled in Onalaska ISD will have equal access to be identified under this definition.

## District Goals

- Critical Thinking The *G/T* student will analyze situations, synthesize data, propose solutions, and evaluate the feasibility of those solutions by applying the information in a creative and productive way.
- Creative Thinking The *G/T* student will develop fluent, flexible, original, and elaborate thinking skills by producing creative products.
- Affective The *G/T* student will better understand and respect their special abilities by recognizing and coping with likeness and differences between themselves and others.
- Independent Study The *G/T* student will initiate, explore, implement, and evaluate independent study and research projects on topics of personal and academic interest and which result in advanced-level creative products.
- Leadership The *G/T* student will demonstrate their special abilities by visualizing, planning, executing, and evaluating goals for the betterment of society.

# Questions and Answers

## Student Assessment

### **1. Are districts required to identify and serve students in each of the four core academic areas?**

Students may be identified in all four core areas of the curriculum; however, students may be identified in the area of general intellectual ability, or even creativity, and then be offered services that emphasize content in all four core areas. If the services are specific classes in the four core areas, students should participate only in areas of their particular strength or talent. For example, one student identified in the area of general intellectual ability may be in classes for all four areas and another student may be in only a math and science class. Examples of learning opportunities that emphasize content from the four core areas and are included in the regular school day may include a combination of the following:

- Interdisciplinary Curriculum
- Special units from each of the core areas
- Differentiation of each of the core areas in regular or self-contained classes
- Acceleration in a discipline that is a particular area of strength
- Honors classes with appropriate modifications for GT students
- Independent study courses (At the elementary level, students may be allowed to pursue specific areas of interest through independent study even though there is not a specific course)
- Dual/Concurrent enrollment

While it is true that any one of the above learning opportunities may not constitute a gifted program, it may be one activity in the "array" or "menu" of options that are available.

### **2. Does Onalaska ISD include provisions in local board policy regarding reassessment of students receiving services in the gifted and talented program?**

No; Onalaska ISD board policy does not have provisions for reassessing students. Once students are identified for services in the gifted and talented program, they remain in the program unless they exit. The state plan allows districts to reassess as needed, but reassessment is not a requirement.

### **3. How can a student be exited or furloughed from gifted/talented program services?**

Onalaska ISD policy allows students to have a one time, one year leave of absence from the gifted and talented program services for extenuating circumstances such as scheduling conflicts.

Exiting of students from the gifted and talented program services is based on multiple criteria including student performance in the program. Exiting of students is finalized by a committee decision after teachers, administrators, parents, counselors, and/or the student have consulted and are in agreement on placement. Two major questions should be asked

prior to removing a child from program services and only after much effort has been made to correct the situation. The questions are:

- a. Is the program hurting the student? For whatever reasons, is the program causing more harm than good?
- b. Is the student hurting the program? Is the student harming the instruction and learning process to the detriment of the other students in the program?

The parent, student, teacher, or counselor may request exits and furloughs.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

### **1. How is curriculum differentiated to meet the needs of gifted learners?**

Curriculum and instruction meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the general school curriculum (TEKS).

- a. **Depth** is defined by the State Plan as the exploration of content within a discipline; analyzing from the concrete to the abstract, familiar to the unfamiliar, known to the unknown; exploring the discipline by going past facts and concepts into generalizations, principles, theories, laws; and investigating the layers of experience within a discipline through details, patterns, trends, unanswered questions, and ethical considerations.
- b. **Complexity** is defined by the State Plan as extending content, in, between, and across disciplines through the study of themes, problems, and issues; seeing relationships between and among ideas in/within the topic, discipline, and disciplines; and examining relationships in, between, and across disciplines over time, and from multiple points of view.
- c. **Pacing** is defined as the acceleration provided in areas of student strengths. Pacing can also allow students to spend more time exploring, pondering, and reflecting in an area of interest.

### **2. How should teachers document differentiation of curriculum for gifted/talented students?**

There are a variety of ways that teachers can document differentiation. Differentiation must be evident in the lesson plans where the teacher should indicate instruction and/or assignment that differ through depth, complexity, and pacing for gifted students. Differentiation may be included in curriculum guides or documents. Classroom schedules may also indicate flexible grouping with differentiated instruction. Copies of assignments, pictures of projects, etc. may also be used (portfolios).

## **Professional Development**

### **1. Who must have professional development in gifted education? Which teachers? Which administrators? Which counselors?**

Prior to assignments, teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the program for gifted students should receive the required minimum 30 hours of training and a minimum of six hours annually. Administrators and counselors who are responsible for programming decisions for gifted/talented students are required to receive a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes: nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options for those students. Any campus or district level administrator (including the superintendent) or counselor who has authority to make scheduling, hiring, and/or program decisions should have a minimum of six hours. (Ref: 19 TAC 89.2 (1) (3) (4); TSP Section 4.1A, 4.2A, 4.3A)

### **2. How much time are each of the three required areas (nature and needs of gifted students, assessing student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students) slated to have as part of the 30-hour minimum?**

The amount of time for each of the areas needed in professional development is not dictated in the Texas Administrative Code. This is a local district decision. Many of the regional education service centers use modules that were developed with the assistance of the Texas Education Agency for needs and characteristics of gifted students; assessing student needs; and curriculum and instruction for gifted students. These modules have a suggested minimum time of six clock hours each.

### **3. Who may offer the 30 hours of professional development training and required six-hour minimum annual update?**

Teachers may obtain the 30 hours and required six-hour minimum annual update from a variety of sources. Regional education service centers, local education agencies, university classes and institutes, and professional consultants are some of the resources available to educators. It is the local school district's decision as to who will provide the training for the district's teachers.

### **4. What should be offered to teachers in the required six-hour minimum annual update?**

The decision is not mandated as to what should be offered as the six-hour minimum annual update training. It was the intent of the law that this on-going professional development for teachers who provided instruction and services for gifted students is individualized for each teacher. The annual update should be based on individual teacher needs related to the objectives of the gifted program. The teacher and his/her supervisor should collaboratively make this decision. Local professional development activities are planned based on the results of yearly Professional Development Needs Assessment survey. (Ref: 19 TAC 89.5; TSP Section 4.4A)

**5. Can a teacher, without the 30-hour training, provide instruction and services as part of the program for gifted students?**

Texas State Plan rule 4.1.2A enables districts to take up to one semester for a teacher to complete the 30 hour training. However, this should be used only in extenuating circumstances. (Ref: TAC 89.2 (2))

## **Family and Community Involvement**

**1. How are parents informed about student identification policy and array of learning opportunities available for GT students in K-12?**

Parents of all Onalaska ISD K-12 students have access to GT identification policies and an array of learning opportunities through campus handbooks. Parents of identified gifted/talented students are informed about program services and an array of learning opportunities through orientation sessions, gifted/talented program information guides, and individual parent/teacher conferences.

**2. How can community members be involved in gifted program services?**

Teachers are encouraged to utilize community members as resource people, mentors, and audiences for sharing student products and achievements. Before allowing anyone to work as a mentor with a student, the proposed mentor must agree to undergo a security check.

## **Program Evaluation**

**1. How often are gifted program services evaluated for improvement?**

Local districts must evaluate the GT program every year. The gifted/talented program is part of the campus/district improvement plans, which are updated annually. Parent, teacher, and student annual surveys provide input for program improvement. These recommendations are presented to the District and Campus Improvement Teams.

## **Gifted and Talented Standards**

The Gifted and Talented Standards were developed by the Texas State Board of Education as the competencies for what teachers of gifted and talented students should know and do. More information can be obtained from the Texas Education Agency website.

## Contacts for Gifted and Talented

<b>Location</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Onalaska ISD District Office	Danna Mitschke Special Programs Coordinator	936-646-1085 dmitschke@onalaskaisd.net
Onalaska Elementary School	Jodi Adkins 3rd- 6th Counselor	936-646-1018 jadkins@onalaskaisd.net
Onalaska Elementary School	Lindsay Duke Pre-K- 2nd Counselor	936-646-1092 lduke@onalaskaisd.net
Onalaska JR SR High School	Christy Elwell Assistant Principal	936-646-1089 celwell@onalaskaisd.net

## General Guidelines

### Parental Consent

Parental consent shall be obtained in writing before any special testing or individual assessment is conducted as part of the screening and identification process. All student information collected during the screening and identification process shall be an educational record, subject to the protections set in our School Board policies.

### Transfer Students

Students who transfer into Onalaska ISD, who have formerly been identified as Gifted and Talented, will be placed in the Gifted and Talented program based on a Conditional Acceptance Agreement until supporting documentation showing previous Gifted and Talented placement has been received. When a student identified as gifted by a previous school district transfers into Onalaska ISD, the student's records shall be reviewed by the appropriate Campus Selection Committee to determine if placement in the District's Gifted and Talented program is appropriate.

The Selection Committee shall make its determination within 30 days of the student's enrollment in the District and shall base its decision on the transferred records, observation reports of the District teachers who instruct the student, and student/parent conferences.

Students entering the district after the identification cycle, who were not previously identified as gifted, will be considered during the next identification cycle. Students from home schooling will have to remain in Onalaska ISD at least one year before all criteria for selection can be documented and the student can be considered for the program.

### Notification to Parents

Parents and students shall be notified in writing upon selection of the student for the Gifted and Talented program. Participation in any program or services provided for gifted students is voluntary. The District shall obtain written permission from the parents before a student is placed in a Gifted and Talented program.

## Gifted and Talented Student Expectations

Students in the OISD Gifted and Talented program will maintain the following expectations:

- Maintain attendance based on the state and local guidelines.
- Maintain report card grades of at least 80 or above.
- Pass all sections of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)
- Comply with all of the district's student code of conduct guidelines
- Maintain proper behavior, high performance, and gifted and talented products
- Maintain a good attitude and work ethic in the gifted and talented classrooms

## Furloughs

A furlough may be granted at the request of the student and/or parent. Students who wish to be withdrawn on a temporary period of no more than one year may request "furlough status". They will need to present to the placement committee their reasons for wishing to be furloughed and their educational plans for the intervening period. The placement committee must document the furlough and should include such documentation in the student's GT folder.

Students who need to request furlough for more than one year must resubmit for another temporary furlough status. If the student or their parent/guardian does not resubmit for another furlough status, the student will be administratively exited from the program and must be formally identified again for the program.

## Probation from the Gifted and Talented Program

If a student consistently has difficulty in the GT program, the teacher, student, parent and/or school administrator may request that a conference be held to determine the nature of the problem and to discuss possible intervention strategies.

K-5th Grades:

1. A conference will be scheduled to review the student's progress.
2. The student may be placed on a probationary period of two weeks to allow the student to regain mastery in the general education classroom.
3. If the student is unable to regain mastery, an extended probationary period may be put in place or the student may be exited from the GT program.

6th-12 Grades:

Each student in grades 6-8 that is not successful in a gifted and talented (Honors) course will be re-evaluated at the end of each semester for continued participation.

***All efforts will be made by parents, teachers, and school administration to assist each student's desire to fulfill his/her potential.***

## Exiting from Gifted and Talented Program

If the student is unsuccessful in fulfilling the program's standards and has been on probation, the campus selection committee will initiate the exit process. According to the Onalaska ISD Gifted and Talented program guidelines, all parents will be informed annually of the following exit criteria. Documentation of at least two of the following areas will be required when implementing the exit process.

- The student moves from the district. No committee action will be taken. A letter of transfer will be sent with the student.
- The Gifted and Talented teacher's recommendation based on observation of student performance, products, and behavior.
- Student request for withdrawal from the program.
- The parent or legal guardian of the GT student requests an exit from the program.
- Evidence of personal or social stresses which prevent self-satisfying student performance.
- Nine weeks grade below 80 for two six weeks.
- The student has exceeded the state and/or local guidelines of unexcused absences during the semester.
- The student has not passed one or more sections of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)
- Poor attitude and/or effort by the students.

\*Discipline and/or poor performance are not grounds for automatic dismissal.

Students who exit from the Gifted and Talented program and later desire to re-enter the program will apply through the next Gifted and Talented selection process. It will be necessary for the student to go through the complete identification process to re-enter the Onalaska ISD Gifted and Talented program.

## Parental Exit Provisions

Parents may withdraw students from the program at any time by contacting the school counselor and submitting written notification. If a student or parent requests removal from the program, the District shall honor that request after a conference with the Campus Selection Committee. Students who exit the program will be eligible to be nominated each subsequent year for identification for the Gifted and Talented program.

## Probation/Exit Procedures

**STEP 1:** Annually, the student expectations and probation procedures will be presented to all Gifted and Talented program parents, identified students, and GT program professional staff.

**STEP 2:** When a student's declining report card performance or failure to meet any two of the other student's expectations, a Gifted and Talented Student Review will be required. The campus administrator and teacher will notify the parents in writing, set up a conference, and initiate the probationary procedures.

**STEP 3:** When a student's progress returns to a satisfactory level, the student will be removed from probationary status.

**STEP 4:** When a Gifted and Talented student's progress requires a GT Student Review during the 3<sup>rd</sup> nine weeks, the student will be placed on probationary status for the following 9 weeks grading period. At the conclusion of this 9 weeks period, if the student's progress has returned to a satisfactory level, the committee will remove the student from the probationary status.

**STEP 5:** When a Gifted and Talented student's progress requires a GT Student Review during any 4<sup>th</sup> nine weeks grading period, the student will be placed on probationary status for the first 9 week grading period of the following school year and the student's progress will be monitored by the GT program teacher and principal using Step 4 if necessary.

## **Appeals**

Parents or students may appeal any final decision of the Campus Selection Committee regarding selection for or removal from the Gifted and Talented Program. Parents who wish to appeal the committee's decision should write a letter requesting a review of the process within five (5) days of the receipt of the committee placement decisions. Appeal shall be made first to the Campus Selection Committee. A conference with the parent will be scheduled so that the principal and other Selection Committee members may share appropriate data with parents. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with the school district policy on Student Rights and Responsibilities; Student and Parent Complaints, (FNG Local) beginning at Level Two.

## **Student Identification Process**

*Onalaska ISD identification process ensures the fair nominating, screening, and selection of students with special needs, such as the culturally diversified, the economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities.*

The purpose of identification is to determine which students will benefit from the services by the Gifted and Talented program.

**The identification process will consist of three distinct phases:**

- **Nomination Phase**
- **Screening Phase (All pertinent information is gathered and prepared for committee review)**
- **Selection Phase**

The instruments and timelines reflected in this document will be used with those students who are nominated and screened for the program. A record of Gifted and Talented nominations, screening criteria, and student profiles will be kept in the Campus Coordinator's office.

## Nomination Phase

Students in first through twelfth grades (1<sup>st</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>) at Onalaska ISD may be nominated for the Gifted and Talented program during the district nomination phase by teachers, counselors, parents, or self-nomination for students (Grades 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>). A nominated student will then proceed through the entire screening process. The nomination process will be published annually in the local newspapers, campus newsletters, and campus/district websites.

Onalaska ISD will undertake to identify at every grade level beginning with 1<sup>st</sup> grade those students who are advanced academically. Students must have completed a minimum of one full grading period **prior to the deadline** for nominations.

Nominations for the Gifted and Talented program will be opened every year for first through twelfth grade students. Parents of nominated students will be asked to sign a Permission to Test forms before further considerations will be made.

## Screening Phase

### Grades: Kindergarten

The screening instruments for Kindergarten will consist of the following subjective and objective instruments:

- TONI 3-Test of Nonverbal Intelligence
- Test of Ability (CogAT)
  - All students in the top 10% on the CogAT will be automatically nominated by the counselor to be screened/advance to the next level
- Project-Based Experience
- Teacher/Parent Survey
- Obtain written parent permission to place in the GT program
- Record data into PEIMS

Complete student profiles and submit to the Campus Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will review student profiles and make selections for the GT program.

**Kindergarten Screening Timeline**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Teachers administer SAGES-3	January
Select students in top 10% on SAGES-3; Parent permission obtained to complete screening and create student portfolios  Distribute OISD Inventory to parents and teachers: Complete screening; Selection Committee meets	January-February
Notify parents of identified/non-identified students; Send home Permission to Serve; Record data in PEIMS	February

**Committee Selection Team: Adm/Counselor, GT Teacher, Special Programs Coor.**

**Grades: First through Twelfth (1st-12th)**

The screening criteria for first through twelfth (1st-12th) grades will consist of the following:

- Teacher/Parent Nomination
- Obtain written parent permission to continue screening
- Conduct screening
- Complete student profiles and submit them to the Campus Selection Committee. The Selection Committee will review student profiles and make selections for the GT program.
- Obtain written parent permission to place in GT program
- Record data into PEIMS

**First through Twelfth (1st-12th) Screening Timeline**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
Parent and Teacher nominations will be accepted through March 1st; obtain Parent Permission to complete planned experiences  Select students who achieve at least 4 points on portfolio planned experiences; Teachers and parents complete OISD Inventory. Students must score Above Average, High, or Superior. English Language Arts and Math grades will be utilized on matrices.	February-March
Notify parents of identified/non-identified students; Send home Permission to Serve; Record data in PEIMS	April

**Committee Selection Team: Adm/Counselor, GT Teacher, Special Programs Coor.**

## **Selection Phase**

A campus selection committee will be used to make all placement, exit, transfer, and appeal decisions. At each campus, the Selection Committee will consist of an administrator/counselor, gifted/talented teacher and teacher(s) who have received training in the nature and needs of gifted students.

After the Screening Committee has determined which students in Kindergarten through Grade Twelve should progress to selection, the committee will review the data on each student and placement determination.

## **Services**

### **Kindergarten- 5th Grade**

Differentiated instruction by the classroom teacher. In addition to their classroom differentiation, the GT teacher for the campus, will pull-out the identified students for a regularly scheduled enrichment class. During this pull-out time, students are provided an array of learning opportunities, problem solving, and research skills and processes, as well as Texas **Performance Standards Projects**. Students are introduced to and use the Independent Investigation Method or IIM, a research process which involves seven user-friendly steps to accomplish research tasks.

### **6th-12th Grades**

Onalaska ISD offers Honors English and Math classes in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. In 8th grade, students have the opportunity to take Algebra I. Beginning in the 9th grade, students will be able to take dual credit courses. The campus also offers Honors English classes and Honors Math classes in high school.

\*In order to qualify for Honors classes, a student must earn a STAAR Meets score (English/Math) and maintain a 85 in the course for that year.