The University of Texas at Tyler
UNIVERSITY ACADEMY™

Gifted and Talented Handbook

2026-2027

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Gifted and Talented Local Policy

The Gifted and Talented Program Local policy is located at www.uttua.org under Policy Group 2- Instruction (PG-2.14).

Gifted and Talented Program

State Program Goals

Students who participate in services designed for gifted/talented 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/talented students will have produced products and performances of professional quality as part of their program services.

Program Design

Identified gifted/talented students will have an array of learning opportunities within the school day throughout the entire year that are commensurate with their abilities and that emphasize content in the four (4) foundation curricular areas.

Gifted/talented students will have the opportunity to work together as a group and work with other students in PBLs throughout the school year as well as opportunities to work independently during the school year. Flexible grouping patterns in PBLs and independent investigations will allow students to learn at the pace and level appropriate for their abilities and skills.

Curriculum and Instruction

UTTUA will meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction.

UTTUA utilizes Project-Based Learning (PBL), where students go through an extended process of inquiry in response to a complex question, problem, or challenge. While allowing for some degree of student "voice and choice," rigorous projects are carefully planned, managed, and assessed to help students learn key academic content, practice 21st Century Skills (such as collaboration, communication & critical thinking), and create high-quality, authentic products & presentations.

The purpose and benefits of rigorous, meaningful, and effective Project-Based Learning:

- It is intended to teach significant content – goals for student learning are explicitly derived from content standards and key concepts at the heart of academic disciplines.
- It is organized around an open-ended Driving Question. This focuses students' work and deepens their learning by framing important issues, debates, challenges, or problems.
- It requires critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. In order to answer a Driving Question and create high-quality work, students need to do much more than remember information. They need to use higher thinking skills and learn to collaborate with team members. Students must listen to others and make their own ideas clear when speaking, be able to read a variety of material, write or otherwise express themselves in various modes, and create effective presentations. These skill competencies are often known as "21st Century Skills," because they are prerequisites for success in the 21st-century workplace.
- It requires inquiry as part of the process of learning and creating something new. Project-Based Learning reverses the order in which information and concepts are traditionally presented. A typical unit with a "project" add-on begins by presenting students with knowledge and concepts, and then, once gained, giving students the opportunity to apply them. Project-Based Learning begins with the vision of an end product or presentation. This creates a context and reason to learn and understand the information and concepts.
- It allows some degree of student voice and choice. Students learn to work independently and take responsibility when they are asked to make choices. The opportunity to make choices, and to express their learning in their own voice, helps to increase students' educational engagement.
- It includes processes for revision and reflection. Students are asked to think about what and how they are learning. They are then asked to give and receive feedback in order to improve the quality of the products they create.
- It involves a public audience. Students present their work to other people, beyond their classmates and teacher – in person or online. This "ups the stakes," increasing students' motivation to do high-quality work, and adds to the authenticity of the project.

Students will have the opportunity to take dual credit courses beginning their ninth-grade year if they have passed identified portions of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment 2.0 (TSIA2). Additionally, high school students identified and G/T will participate in two seminars per year that will cover an introduction to academic coaching, information on major factors affecting academic performance, overview of academic pathways, meet coaches that will provide individual coaching sessions, and participate in a mock coaching session. The students will have the opportunity to sign up for individual coaching sessions throughout each semester to support their success.

Gifted and Talented Contact Information

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TEA Definition of Gifted and Talented

"Gifted and talented student" means a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing 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 Characteristics

Although wide variations exist among the areas of giftedness, the following lists are characteristics or traits that a gifted and talented individual may possess within each area. Please keep these characteristics in mind when referring students for gifted and talented services.

Language Arts	Social Science/Humanities
● Extensive vocabulary ● Keen power of observation ● Good memory ● Perceives abstract ideas rapidly ● Ability to portray to other's feelings, actions, personalities, situations ● Possesses creativity and inventiveness ● Has varied interests ● Demonstrates an intellectual playfulness with words ● Writes fluently with insight and strong personal voice ● Sees relationships among apparently unrelated ideas ● Reads avidly	● Possesses a large storehouse of information about a variety of topics ● Quick mastery and recall of factual information ● Rapid insight into cause-effect relationships ● Ready grasp of underlying principles-quickly makes valid generalizations ● Keen and alert observer ● Becomes absorbed and involved in certain topics or problems ● Prefers to work independently-requires little attention from teacher ● Interested in many "adult" problems ● Likes to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations ● Quite concerned with right/wrong, good/bad Great deal of curiosity about many things ● Generates a large number of ideas or solutions to problems and questions ● Uninhibited in expressions of opinion ● Keen sense of humor ● Willingly tries out different media ● Elaborates on ideas from other people
Mathematics	**Science**
● Solves problems, yet sometimes not able to explain procedures ● Performs computations easily and accurately, but resists extensive calculating ● Hypothesizes frequently ● Works a long time on challenging problems although there may be no solution ● Works easily with technology ● Is preoccupied with scales, statistics, records, almanacs, globes, maps ● Devises own languages, codes, number	● Questions critically ● Visualizes mentally ● Thinks critically-abstraction, conceptualization, and synthesis ● Attends to details related to the task at hand ● Is persistent in the pursuit of answers and solutions ● Sees alternatives and offers several solutions ● Makes generalizations ● Ability to use resources with the intent to find answers

systems ● Is sensitive to patterns in shapes ● Ability to translate unfamiliar abstraction into a familiar form ● Can translate the familiar into an abstraction ● Intuitively solve seemingly difficult problems mentally ● Computes answers in a non-traditional manner ● Uses unusual techniques in problem solving	● Ready grasp of underlying principles and quickly makes valid deductions ● Keen and alert observer ● Tries to understand complicated material ● Reasons things out for him/herself ● Sees logical/common sense answers ● Is easily bored with mundane or routine ● Is a self-starter-intrinsically motivated ● Shows an interest in science

*Characteristics taken from "The Identification of Gifted and Talented Students" as adopted by The University of Texas at Tyler University Academy Board of Trustees.

Screening, Identification, and Placement

Referrals

Students may be referred for the gifted and talented program each school year from August through January by teachers, counselors, parents, or other interested persons by completing the referral form located at https://www.uttua.org/departments/special-programs/gifted-and-talented/referral-form.php.

At the beginning of each year, families and staff will be able to attend an awareness session providing an overview of the assessment procedures and services for gifted/talented students by the district and/or campus.

Assessment

A nonverbal screener assessment will take place in January of each school year for Kindergarten scholars, and in February of each school year, an abilities test will be given to those approved from the referral process. Data will also be collected from multiple sources to be evaluated by the committee when determining gifted and talented services eligibility. In grades KG-12, three or more qualitative and quantitative data measures will be used to determine whether a student needs gifted/talented services including the Home Rating Scales (HRS), School Rating Scales (SRS), Student Portfolio (collection of student work), and either the nonverbal screener assessment or abilities test.

The final determination of a student's need for gifted/talented services is made by a committee of at least three (3) local district or campus educators who have received

training in the nature and needs of gifted/talented students (G/T Day 1) and who have met and reviewed the individual student data.

Families and staff will be informed of individual student assessment results and placement decisions as well as given an opportunity to schedule a conference to discuss assessment data. A copy of the student's assessment data will be kept in the student's cumulative folder.

Reassessment

UT Tyler University Academy may reassess gifted/talented students to determine appropriate program placement no more than once in elementary grades, once in middle school grades, and once in high school.

Transfers

When a student identified as gifted by a previous Texas public school enrolls in UT Tyler University Academy, the student's records shall be reviewed by the appropriate placement committee to determine if placement in the UT Tyler University Academy gifted and talented program is appropriate. If the transferring student's records are limited or not available, or if the identification criteria for placement in the program for gifted and talented students at the previous school are not comparable to UT Tyler University Academy's, the standard procedures for identifying gifted and talented students shall be employed.

The placement committee shall make its determination within 30 days of the student's enrollment in UT Tyler University Academy, and shall base its decision on the transferred records. If the placement committee determines that the student is not eligible for G/T services, the parent/guardian will be notified and given the option for UT Tyler University Academy to begin our identification process or choose to refer their child for identification testing in the spring semester.

Furloughs

Any student who is unable to maintain satisfactory performance or whose educational needs are not being met within the gifted and talented program may be placed on furlough. UT Tyler University Academy, a parent, or the student may initiate a furlough by submitting a written request through the campus director.

The placement committee shall document the specific reasons for granting the furlough and the time period for which the furlough shall last. At the end of a furlough, the student may reenter the program, be placed on another furlough, or be exited from the program.

Exit and Re-entry

Student performance in the program shall be monitored. The placement committee may exit a student from the program at any time if the placement committee determines it is in the student's best interest and his or her educational needs. If a student or parent requests removal from the program, the placement committee shall meet with the parent and student before granting the request. The committee will review multiple criteria including student performance in response to services and ensure that interventions have been provided prior to the committee making a decision.

Appeal Procedures

A parent or student may appeal a final decision of the placement committee regarding placement for or removal from the gifted and talented program. Appeals shall first be made to the placement committee. Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with the policy on Parent and Student Complaints, beginning at Level One.

Program Evaluation

The gifted and talented program shall be evaluated annually by an advisory group of community members, parents of gifted/talented students, school staff, and gifted/talented education staff. Evaluation information shall also be used to modify and update the program. During the evaluation process, the gifted and talented population will be compared to the district and/or campus population to determine if they are closely reflective. The evaluation information shall be shared with Board members, administrators, teachers, counselors, students in the gifted and talented program, and the community.

2025-2026	District	Longview Campus	Palestine Campus	Tyler Campus
Total Enrollment	1299	512	292	495
G/T Identified Students	138	73	36	29
Percent of G/T Students Identified in Population	10.6%	14.3%	12.3%	5.9%

Parent and Community Involvement

Information concerning special opportunities will be made available and disseminated to parents and community members.

Professional Learning

All personnel involved in the planning, creation, delivery, and administration of services to gifted/talented students will possess the knowledge required to develop and provide differentiated programs and services.

Teachers who provide instruction and services that are a part of the district's defined gifted/talented services will complete a minimum of thirty (30) hours of professional learning that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, identification and assessment of gifted/talented students, and curriculum and instruction for gifted/talented students.

Teachers without required training who are assigned to provide instruction and services that are part of the district's defined gifted/talented services are required to complete the thirty (30) hour training within one semester.

Teachers serving gifted and talented programs are required to earn an additional six hours of training annually.

Administrators who have supervisory duties for service decisions are required to complete a minimum of six (6) hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students and service options for gifted/talented students.

Counselors who work with gifted/talented students are required to complete a minimum of six (6) hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, service options for gifted/talented students, and social emotional learning.

Evaluation of professional learning activities for gifted and talented education is ongoing by the curriculum, instruction, and assessment department. The evaluation results are used in making decisions regarding future staff development plans.