



Gifted and Talented Handbook 2018-19

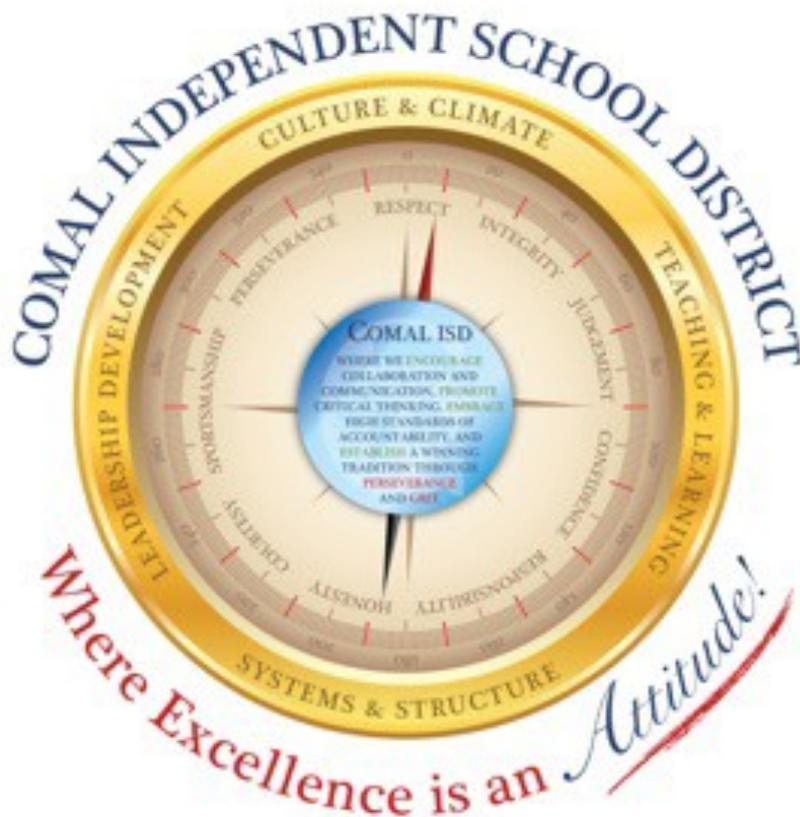


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The Comal Independent School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, marital or veteran status, the presence of a medical condition, disability, or any other legally protected status. The Executive Director of Human Resources, has been designated to coordinate compliance with the nondiscrimination requirements of Title IX, and Coordinator of Special Programs, to coordinate compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

COMAL INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

Where we ENCOURAGE collaboration and communication, PROMOTE critical thinking, EMBRACE high standards of accountability, and ESTABLISH a winning tradition through PERSEVERENCE and GRIT.

DISTRICT PHILOSOPHY OF GIFTED EDUCATION

We believe that every human being is of value, with the right to optimal development. Each person is unique; therefore we are committed to an educational program that recognizes the special value and needs of the individual student. Providing programs and materials for *gifted students who perform at or show the potential for performing at a remarkable high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment* (§29.121) is an integral part of this commitment.

We believe that gifted students need a *continuum of learning experiences that leads to the development of advanced level products and/or performances* (§89.3 TAC). Modifications in instructional strategies, content, and the development of skills and/or products are part of the services provided. The program helps develop self-actualized learners by encouraging effective communication, guiding learners to be focused and self-directed, nurturing intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, and focusing on independent research study skills, as well as developing critical and creative thinking and problem solving skills.

The purpose of the program is to seek, identify, and provide gifted learners with experiences that develop the potential of each individual. Identified gifted students should be challenged in order to fully develop their abilities.

PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Comal ISD Gifted and Talented Program is to foster critical and creative thinking, collaboration, and problem solving while meeting the social, emotional and academic needs of gifted students.

The goal is to create independent learners who are challenged to discover their gifts and talents and contribute to a global society.

STATE GOAL FOR SERVICES FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

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

(From the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students, Revised May 2009 Texas Education Agency)

DISTRICT GOALS FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

It is the goal of Comal ISD to use the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* as the guide for continuous improvement of district GT services. Improvement and modifications of services include:

- Differentiated instruction and curriculum options in intellectual, creative or artistic areas, leadership and specific academic fields
- Opportunities for acceleration in areas of exceptional academic strength
- Depth and complexity as an integral part of the state/district curriculum with students creating sophisticated products and/or performance assessed by experts in the field that is the focus of the product.

COURSE SEQUENCE OVERVIEW S.A.G.E. - Gifted and Talented Program

Elementary Overview:

The elementary GT program focuses on general intelligence and uses core subject areas of language arts, science, social studies, and mathematics as a base for developing higher level thinking skills and problem solving strategies. All of the CISD elementary campuses have GT facilitators with extensive training, including the 30 hour required state GT training and annual 6 hour updates. These GT facilitators are responsible for directing and facilitating the GT program at each school by implementing the district's identification process (including referral/screening, assessment, notification and documentation), providing differentiated instruction support for classroom teachers, providing pullout classes for identified GT students, and conducting the annual GT campus program evaluation. A variety of GT staff development is offered to all CISD teachers each year-including nature and needs, identification and assessment of gifted students, curriculum and instruction (differentiation), social and emotional needs, and creativity.

Kindergarten:

Kindergarten students who are identified for the GT program are provided services by the campus GT facilitator starting on or before March 1st of their kindergarten year.

Grades 1-5:

Identified gifted students are grouped (clustered) together in classes with trained GT teachers at each grade level. (Clusters of at least three gifted students per classroom is suggested.)

The GT facilitator provides academic pullout services on each campus and facilitates higher-level thinking skills through a continuum of learning.

Appropriately challenging learning experiences related to the four (4) core academic areas (language arts, math, social studies, and science) for gifted and talented students are offered at the elementary level through a variety of instructional strategies. Examples include acceleration or compacting of grade level curriculum, in-depth critical investigations, and/or thematic units. Curriculum is differentiated in content depth and complexity, process and/or product by those involved in the instruction of identified gifted or talented students. Emphasis is placed upon activities that develop the student as a life-long learner.

Gifted and Talented

Secondary:

Middle School: (see Middle School Course Guide at comalisd.org)

6th grade – Critical Thinking Through Cultural Awareness – (Prerequisite: GT identified)

This class is designed to meet specific needs of identified Gifted and Talented students. Emphasis is on intellectual exploration and the development of critical thinking and problem solving through an appreciation of cultures. An enrichment curriculum integrates core content areas and explores the process of problem solving through both independent and team-based development of advanced projects. This class incorporates aspects of communication, character development and effective use of technology/resources. Assessment is based on both product quality and process skill.

7th grade – Critical Thinking Through Cultural Awareness – (Prerequisite: GT identified)

This class is designed to meet the specific needs of identified Gifted and Talented students. Students will continue to explore the process of critical thinking and problem solving and begin to implement and expand the process through an appreciation of cultures. Research skills and opportunities for creativity will be promoted. High level products and the process associated with critical thinking will be assessed.

8th grade – Critical Thinking Through Cultural Awareness – (Prerequisite: GT identified)

This eighth grade class is designed to meet the specific needs of identified Gifted and Talented students. Students will apply the process of critical thinking and creative problem solving through an appreciation of cultures. The course requires high-level, independent and team-based cooperative experiences leading to the development of advanced products. Students will be required to participate in the Texas Performance Standards Project in an area of their interest as a final product.

High School: Grades 9-12 (see High School Course Guide at comalisd.org)

- Dual high school/college credit courses are offered at each CISD high school. For information on college credit earned from high school courses students should contact their campus counselor.
- A variety of Pre-Advanced Placement and Advanced Placement courses are offered at each district high school. Pre-Advanced Placement courses offer differentiated content with more depth and complexity and are designed to prepare students for Advanced Placement courses. Students may take Pre-Advanced Placement courses without being required to take Advanced Placement courses. See *High School Course Guide* for Pre-AP listings.
- Advanced Placement courses, usually taken during the junior and senior year of high school, are college level courses, receive Comal ISD's Advanced Placement Weighted Ranking, and generally require Pre-Advanced Placement courses as prerequisites. See *High School Course Guide* for AP course listings.
- Grades 10-12: The Capstone program is built on the foundation of the two new AP Courses – AP Seminar and AP Research – and is designed to complement and enhance in-depth, discipline specific study provided through other AP courses. In AP Seminar, students investigate real-world issues from multiple perspectives, gathering and analyzing information

from various sources in order to develop valid evidence-based arguments. In AP Capstone, Year 2, these students will enroll in AP Research. Students earn the AP Capstone diploma by both completing coursework (AP Seminar and AP Research) and AP Exams (scoring a three or higher on these two AP exams, as well as on four additional AP exams of their choosing).

CURRICULUM

The curriculum and instructional needs of gifted students are met by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the academic content, learning processes, and evaluation products relevant to the general school program. This modification is accomplished through a **differentiated**, academically enriched learning environment, as well as through instructional methods and materials that encourage independent scholarship.

The following are principles of differentiation that came from the National Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented and continue to be the basis for differentiated experiences.

1. Present content that is related to broad base issues, problems, or themes.
2. Integrate multiple disciplines into an area of study.
3. Present comprehensive, reinforcing, mutually related experiences within an area of study.
4. Allow for the in-depth learning of a self-selected topic.
5. Develop independent or self-directed study skills.
6. Develop research skills and methods.
7. Focus on open-ended tasks.
8. Develop productive, complex, abstract, and/or higher level thinking skills.
9. Integrate basic and higher level thinking skills within the curriculum.
10. Encourage the development of self-understanding, i.e., recognizing and using one's abilities, becoming self-directed, appreciating likenesses and differences between oneself and others.
11. Encourage the development of products that challenge existing ideas and produce new ones.
12. Encourage the development of products that use new techniques, materials, and forms.
13. Evaluate student outcomes by using appropriate and specific criteria through self-appraisal, criterion referenced and/or standardized instruments.

The principles of differentiation fall into three categories: content, process, and product. The content items are the first four principles and deal with what students are taught. The process items are the next five and include how students obtain skills and develop thinking. The final four principles are product items. Products are the ways in which students demonstrate learning and how we communicate what we have learned.



NOMINATION PROCEDURES

A student enrolled in a Comal ISD elementary or secondary school may be nominated for the Gifted and Talented program by:

1. a teacher, counselor or campus administrator,
2. his or her parent/guardian, or by another adult who has knowledge of his/her abilities,
3. himself or herself, or
4. a peer.

Referrals for assessment of students in grades 1-12 will be accepted beginning the first week of school. The referral deadline for testing is October 1st, 2018 for students in grades 1-12 and December 3rd for Kindergarten students.

Consideration for the GT program and/or additional assessment will be on-going based on the students' demonstrated need. Parents will be notified of results after testing is completed. All placement decisions will be made by a committee of GT educators as required by the *Texas State Plan* (§89.2(1) TAC). Services for identified students will begin in January for students in grade 1-8 and on or before March 1st for kindergarten students.

Parents are required to complete a referral form, which includes written consent for screening. Forms can be found on the Comal ISD website or by requesting them from the campus GT Facilitator.

IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES

The formal identification process for the Gifted and Talented program occurs in the fall for students in grade 1-12 and in January for students in kindergarten. Students may be considered for the CISD Gifted and Talented program only once within a 12-month period. Assessment in the areas of intellectual and academic fields with a minimum of three criteria, including both qualitative and quantitative measures, is used. A combination of the following assessments may be used during the assessment process.

- **Intellectual Ability – Objective Measures**
- **Student Characteristics – Subjective Measures**
 - Inventory of behaviors compiled by the parent/guardian
 - Observation inventory completed by teacher
 - Portfolio activities demonstrating problem solving, fluency, and elaboration, completed at school may be used.

In the case of transfer students, the Campus GT Committee may substitute results from other current, comparable assessments.

Assessment data (identified only by student ID number) is reviewed and analyzed. The District GT committee recommends appropriate educational placements. Parents/guardians will be notified of the committee's decision by elementary GT facilitators and secondary Counselors. Parents/guardians of all qualifying students must give written consent to their child's participation in the GT program.

Parents of non-qualifying students may request a conference with the elementary GT teacher or secondary Counselor to review the assessment results. If the parents or guardians question the decision of the District GT committee, they may initiate the appeals process. All appeals will go to the district.

Students in the CISD Gifted and Talented program are identified as General Academic ability students.

GIFTED and TALENTED PROGRAM POLICIES

Appeal Process

A parent/guardian or student may appeal the final placement decision. If the decision is made to appeal the GT Committee's decision, please comply with the following steps:

- 1. Contact the Elementary GT Facilitator or Middle School Counselor on your child's campus to discuss the assessments that were administered and the scores your child earned in each of the areas assessed.**

- 2. The formal appeal must be made in writing or emailed to the Elementary GT Facilitator or Middle School Counselor**
 - The written statement requesting an appeal must be received within **30 days** of the date appearing on the Letter of Non-Qualification.
 - All documentation in support of the appeal must be received within **30 days** of the date appearing on the Letter of Non-Qualification.
 - Supporting documentation should be – but is not limited to - standardized test scores provided by an outside source; or a portfolio of your student's work, along with an explanation of how that work reflects gifted/talented traits.
 - Please include your day-time phone number, your email or mailing address, campus, and child's grade level with your appeal.

- 3. After reviewing the evidence in support of an appeal, the GT Placement Committee will determine whether additional assessment is warranted or whether the initial decision will stand.**

Any subsequent appeals shall be made in accordance with Board Policy FNG (LOCAL) beginning at Level Two.

Transfer Students

Parents are responsible for providing the GT facilitator/Counselor with documentation of prior GT program placement.

Based on a review of such documentation, transfer students who have been identified for a GT program in another district will be considered for entry into the CISD GT program. The GT Committee will review identification data from the former school district. Additional assessment may be required. See Board Policy EHBB (LEGAL/LOCAL).

Furlough

Furloughs from GT services are intended to help students who need a temporary break from the GT program, not to remove non-performing students. The GT Committee may grant a furlough when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the student. A furlough may not exceed one academic year. At the end of the furlough period, the student will be re-evaluated by the GT Committee. See Board Policy EHBB (LOCAL).

Refusal of Services/Exit

Identified GT students and/or their parents may refuse services and/or request to be exited from the GT program. See Board Policy (EHBB (LEGAL/LOCAL)).

- Parents of elementary students can refuse GT services that will result from student placement in a clustered classroom.
- Parents of middle school students can refuse GT services that will result from enrollment in the *Critical Thinking through Cultural Awareness* elective.
- Parents and/or students can request to be exited from the GT program.
- Documentation of refusal of GT services and/or exit from the GT program will be required and forwarded to the district Executive Director of Curriculum & GT Services.

Annual Review

Students who qualify for the GT program are subject to an informal review at the end of each academic year. Each student's progress will be evaluated based on satisfactory performance in the program. Satisfactory performance is defined as demonstrated development in higher level thinking skills, mastery of major concepts, and development of advanced level products that include independent study habits and initiative.

Professional Development

All teachers of gifted and talented students have completed an initial thirty hours of prescribed professional development including nature and needs of the gifted student, assessment training, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students which includes differentiation and creativity strategies. Teachers also receive six hours of yearly update training.

Administrators and counselors who make program decisions are also required to have at least six hours of administrative training in nature and needs; identification and assessment; curriculum and instruction; and program options for gifted and talented students.

All CISD classroom teachers are provided opportunities to participate in trainings throughout the year in a variety of settings such as district workshops, online programs, state level conferences, or workshops offered by the Education Service Centers, the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented, and/or the College Board. Teachers are responsible for implementing their training in the classroom to meet gifted students' needs.

Family – Community Involvement

The district recognizes the vital importance of parent/guardian support and community involvement to the success and growth of the Gifted and Talented Program.

Community volunteers are encouraged to share their expertise by presenting lectures/demonstrations on various topics related to the themes studied in each grade or as mentors to students who are involved in independent study in an area of special interest.

Support and assistance in GT program planning and improvement is encouraged through the parent/community advisory committee. Representatives of the parent advisory committee will sit on the district advisory committee to participate in program planning and improvement. Parents/guardians provide valuable feedback on program effectiveness through discussions and/or campus and district surveys.

RESOURCES

American Association for Gifted Children at Duke University

<https://aagc.ssri.duke.edu/>

The American Association of Gifted Children at Duke University (AAGC) is the nation's oldest advocacy organization for gifted children. Their mission is *"to foster a better understanding of the needs and capabilities of gifted children, to encourage research in the field of education and nurturing of gifted children, and to accomplish and encourage other initiatives relating to the development of gifted children."*

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC)

www.nagc.org

NAGC supports and develops *policies and practices that encourage and respond to the diverse expressions of gifts and talents in children and youth from all cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic groups*

National Society for the Gifted and Talented (NSGT)

www.nsGT.org

NSGT's mission is *to advance the development of gifted, talented, and high potential youth, in the United States and abroad, through opportunities, advocacy, and exemplary programs and practices.*

Texas Association of Gifted and Talented (TAGT)

www.txgifted.org

TAGT offers a parent affiliate membership that provides various resources to support parents.

World Council for the Gifted and Talented Children, Inc.

www.SENGifted.org

SENG's mission is about empowering families and communities in reaching goals. SENNG focuses on the *social and emotional needs of gifted individuals.*

