

United ISD Program of GT and Advanced Academics (GT/AA)

Goal

The goal of the United Independent School District Program of Gifted/Talented and Advanced Academics is to enable GT and AP students to progress beyond the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) of the regular school curriculum by providing in-depth learning experiences that explore complex subjects and issues.

Objectives

The United ISD Gifted and Talented (GT) Program Objectives are:

- To increase the number of qualified students with disabilities and/or Limited English Proficiency enrolled in the Gifted and Talented Program
- To increase the parental involvement of identified students

The Advanced Placement Program (AP) Objectives are:

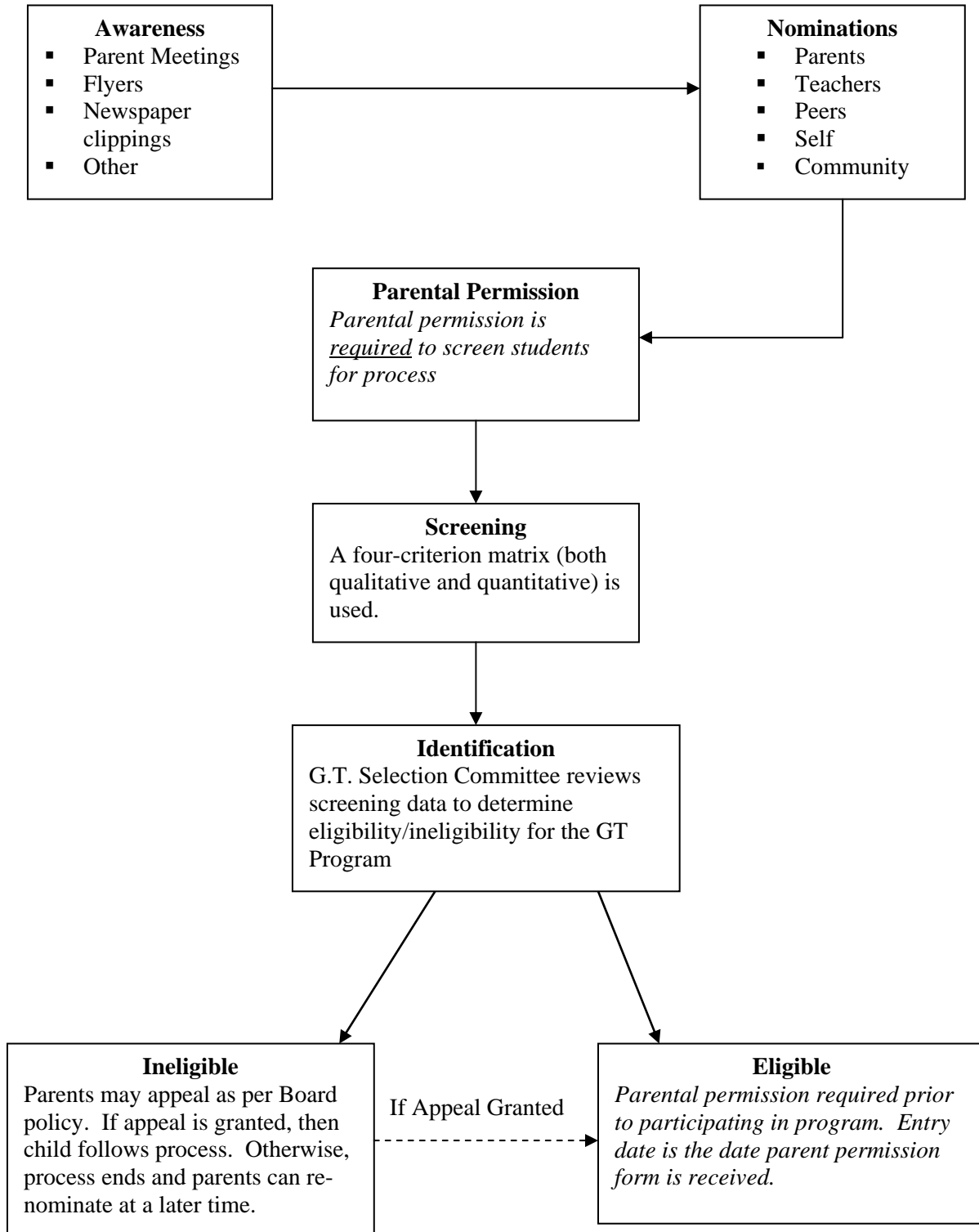
- To increase the parental involvement of Pre-AP and AP students
- To increase the number of students with disabilities and/or Limited English Proficiency enrolled in Pre-AP and AP courses
- To increase the number of students enrolled in AP courses and to increase the number of students passing the AP exams with grades of 3, 4, or 5
- To increase the number of students pursuing post-secondary courses of study
- To increase the number of students securing employment in technical, medical, or science-related fields
- To increase the number of students participating in dual credit courses

Student Expectations

As a result of participation in the GT/AA Program, students are expected to:

- Grow in understanding of universal themes, issues, or problems through subject related activities planned to develop these understandings.
- Develop thinking skills (critical, creative, problem-solving, and logical) that will enable them to take their rightful place in solving social, ecological, and technical problems of the future.
- Develop independence in acquisition of knowledge and in learning to apply information in new situations and use it to develop new products.
- Develop an understanding of their giftedness and an appreciation for others through studies of individual differences and through interaction with both intellectual and social peers.

Identification Process



Steps to Identification

Nominations

A teacher, counselor, administrator, parent or peer may nominate students, or the student may initiate the nomination. Nomination packets may be requested from the campus counselor at the beginning of October each year and are due back in the counselor's office by the end of October. Testing will be conducted in November. Parents will be notified by mail no later than May regarding student eligibility.

Screening Process for Grades 1-12

A four criteria matrix is used in the identification process:

- 1. Aptitude Test:** Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test 2 is used. It is a timed test (30 minutes). The campus counselor administers this test. Pearson Co. scores the tests.
- 2. Teacher Jotdown:** The teacher uses a form on which s/he notes her/his observations of student's gifted and talented characteristics.

OR

Parent Jotdown: A parent jotdown is a form on which a parent notes observations of gifted characteristics.

- 3. Portfolio:** Students who meet the minimum criteria will be required to submit a portfolio. It is the teacher's responsibility to organize a portfolio with parental review. In addition, a portfolio review and agreement form must be completed. The portfolio should contain **no more than five** items of which only **three** are used for scoring. Items may include such items as artwork, a story written by the child, and innovative projects.

Guidelines for products:

1. Three dimensional projects should be photographed or videotaped with a detailed written explanation of photograph or videotape (on regular VHS tape or DVD).
2. Audio cassette tapes should be standard size.
3. Computer generated projects should be printed or submitted via USB drive.

****Products will not be accepted if they do not adhere to these guidelines. All students who qualify for portfolio evaluation must submit a portfolio, or the GT identification process is halted and the student is not eligible for the program.**

- 4. Grade Averages:** The grade average will be determined by the core subject areas at the end of the fall semester. The core areas include: language arts, reading, math, science, and social studies.

*A language arts grade will be determined by averaging the reading and English/ESL grades in situations where both content areas are combined and offered as only one course. A student report card may be necessary.

The combined score of the four criteria shall be the student's total matrix score.

*Upon parental request, new out-of-district students who enroll in UISD in August and have not been formally identified in their former district will be screened within the first 30 working days beginning with the first class day in August. After the 30 day window (in the fall semester), new out-of-district students will follow the regular GT timeline upon nomination.

*Upon parental request, new out-of-district students who enroll in the spring semester will begin the identification process by the first 30 working days beginning with the first class day in August of the upcoming school year.

*Counselors shall distribute district permission slips to obtain parental consent. Upon receipt of the signed original permission slips, the GT/AA Office shall disseminate the appropriate testing materials to the counselors who shall return the tests along with the portfolios for scoring approximately two weeks prior to the end of the 30-day window.

Identification Process

- Identification is an ongoing process.
- The GT Selection Committee (comprised of the Director, Coordinator, and/or local educators trained in nature and needs of gifted students) will meet to review each identification matrix. Students meeting the minimum score indicated on the identification matrix will be recommended for the program.
- Once identified, students will participate from year to year without re-identification unless the student is formally exited from the program. However, the student's participation in a particular subject may be reevaluated based on the most appropriate placement for that child.
- Students in kindergarten are pre-screened early in the fall semester and tested in November. Parents are notified of student eligibility by March 1.
- Newly enrolled students who qualify for the gifted program in another district need proper GT documentation from their previous district. All documentation will be subject to verification by the director and coordinator, not the campus. Students will be accepted into the UISD GT Program upon reception of the Letter of Eligibility.
- All students shall receive written notification of their status. All students recommended for the GT program must have parental permission for program participation on file prior to admission into the program and prior to being coded as GT.

Appeals:

Any student not qualifying for the GT program may appeal the GT Selection Committee’s decision within ten school/business days from the date of written notification. Appeals are made to the GT Director, and additional information may be requested on those students whose scores warrant consideration.

Kindergarten Students:

All Kindergarten students are pre-screened using the Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test. Testing is done at the campus level in September. Counselors turn in scored tests to the district office. Even though students are prescreened, all students have the opportunity to be nominated during the regular identification process, which takes place during the month of October. The identification process for Kinder must be completed and students must receive services by March 1.

Transfer Students:

Out of District Transfer Students

- A student who has been identified as gifted and talented in another school district will be considered for placement in the gifted and talented program at United ISD. The transfer student may be admitted into the program pending verification and review of the GT documentation by the GT/AA Director and Coordinator.

Intra-district GT Transfers

- Students transferring to a GT magnet site are required to complete an intra-district transfer form that must be approved by the receiving principal and the sending principal. This form must be completed and submitted to the Department of Student Services by June 1st of each year. Campuses and parents are responsible for the direction of the forms. Parents are also responsible for the transportation of their children to and from a GT magnet site.
- The GT/AA office is responsible for providing the necessary GT documentation upon request as students transfer within the district.

Reassessment:

Once identified, students will participate from year to year without re-identification unless the student is formally exited from the program. However, the student’s participation in a particular subject may be reevaluated based on the most appropriate placement for that child, especially in the transition years from elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school. This evaluation may be based on the 5th and 8th Grade Gifted Student Inventory Form. This form is completed by the teachers at the appropriate grade levels and submitted to the district GT/AA office.

Furlough: – The GT Selection Committee may place students who are unable to maintain satisfactory performance within the structure of the gifted and talented program on furlough. The purpose of such a furlough is to provide the student with an opportunity to attain performance goals established by the Selection Committee. A furlough may also be granted at the request of the student and/or parent. For students with extenuating circumstances, a furlough form must be agreed upon and signed by parent, student, campus administrator, teacher, and the GT/AA Director/Coordinator (all of whom comprise the GT Selection Committee). The student’s furlough status shall be reviewed on a semester basis to determine appropriate placement. At the end of the furlough, the student’s progress shall be reassessed, and the student may reenter the gifted program, be removed from the program, or be placed on another furlough.

School administration will be responsible for providing a list to the GT/AA Department reflecting students not enrolled in at least one Pre AP/AP course, dual credit college course, a research and design course, or a designated magnet specialty course per semester. Students not enrolled in at least one of the aforementioned courses may be placed on a furlough.

Exit: – Student performance in the program shall be monitored. A student shall be removed from the program at any time the GT Selection Committee determines that it is in the student’s best interest. If a student or parent requests removal from the program, the Selection Committee shall meet with the parent and student before honoring the request. A student who has been exited wishing to reenter the GT program must again proceed through the GT identification process.

Gifted and Talented Identification Timeline

Kindergarten Initial G.T. Screening

August-September <ul style="list-style-type: none">All Kindergarten teachers not G.T. certified are required to begin 30-hour G.T. training.30-day Identification Process for K-12 students new to the district
September *Note: Deadline for submission of materials for 30 day ID Process is two weeks prior to the end of the 30 day period. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Kindergarten identification process begins.Counselors issue G.T. Kinder Parent Permission for Pre-Screening forms.Campuses offer the Goodenough-Harris Drawing Test to all Kinder students whose parents have authorized testing.Naglieri tests for students new to the district are administered.
October <ul style="list-style-type: none">All potentially gifted Kindergarten students are nominated for gifted and talented screening.Goodenough –Harris Tests are due to the GT/AA Office.

G.T. Identification Process for Grades 1 - 12

October *Note: Deadline for Nominating Students is the Last Friday of October. <ul style="list-style-type: none">District provides campus in-services on G.T. Identification process and portfolio development upon request.Counselors disseminate the Parent Permission for Screening letters.
October-November <ul style="list-style-type: none">Counselors collect Parent Permission for Screening letters and administer the Naglieri Non-Verbal Ability Test to nominated students.Naglieri Tests are due to the GT/AA district office.GT/AA Office mails Naglieri tests to the company for scoring.
December <ul style="list-style-type: none">Counselors submit student folder with Parent Jotdown or Teacher Jotdown to the GT/AA Department for all students who meet the minimum score to continue the identification process for GT.All Kinder teachers must have completed the 30-hour GT certification.
January <ul style="list-style-type: none">GT/AA office retrieves first semester averages.GT/AA office notifies counselors of which kinder students will be required to submit portfolios. Counselors will notify parents.Campus counselors will notify parents of students not qualifying for portfolio submission.
February <p>Kinder portfolios and portfolio agreement forms are due to the counselor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Counselors deliver kinder portfolios to a designated location.Kinder portfolio evaluations take place. Counselors pick up portfolios.Kinder eligibility/non-eligibility letters are distributed to parents.
March – April <ul style="list-style-type: none">March 1—Identified Kinder students begin receiving GT services.Portfolios for grades 1-12 and portfolio agreement forms are due to counselor. Counselors deliver portfolios to a designated location. Portfolio evaluations for 1st – 12th grade take place. Counselors pick up portfolios. G.T. Selection Committee meets to finalize process.
May <ul style="list-style-type: none">1st-12th Eligibility/non-eligibility letters are distributed to parents.Parents are notified of eligibility/non-eligibility.

Learning Opportunities

Elementary Schools – Every elementary campus offers G.T. instruction in grades K-5 in the classroom and through a GT Pullout Program in which students conduct research in order to create original products and performances. Curriculum for these students is also differentiated to provide depth and complexity thus, encompassing the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Middle Schools – Middle school students are given the option of attending a designated magnet site (with the understanding that the parent/guardian is responsible for transportation) or their home campus. Students will be grouped homogeneously in the areas of math, reading, and language arts. In addition, an array of appropriately challenging learning experiences is provided for gifted/talented students in each of the four foundation curricular areas through the incorporation of the *Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP)*.

High Schools – High school students are served through Pre-AP and AP classes as described below and the core curriculum:

- *Pre-Advanced Placement* – The Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) courses are designed to introduce concepts and assessment methods to prepare students for success when they take Advanced Placement courses, strengthen the curriculum, and increase academic challenge.
- *Advanced Placement* – The Advanced Placement (AP) courses allow students to participate in college-level courses and possibly earn college-level credit while still in high school. Students are strongly encouraged to take the exam for the AP course(s) in which they are enrolled. A grade of 3, 4, or 5 is considered to be a qualifying score. The amount of college credit granted depends upon the individual college or university for which the student is applying.
- *Concurrent Enrollment* – High school students in their junior year meeting specific criteria (as set forth in district policy) may enroll concurrently at the local university or community college.
- *Distance Learning* – High school students may participate in distance learning for dual credit.
- *Magnet School Enrollment* – High school students may opt to enroll at one of the three district magnet schools upon meeting eligibility criteria.
 - J.B. Alexander High School Magnet for Health & Science
 - United South High School Magnet for Global Business and Advanced Technology
 - United High School Magnet for Engineering and Technology
- *Early High School Graduation* – High school students have the option of graduating under the early high school graduation program as outlined in school board policy.
- *High Schools Texas Performance Standards Project* - High school students are provided a continuum of learning experiences that lead to the development of advanced-level products an/or performances.

Curriculum

The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school as stated in the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted Students.

Curriculum content is organized around broad-based themes:

◇ Kindergarten	Beginnings/Explorations
◇ First Grade	Changes
◇ Second Grade	Structures
◇ Third Grade	Order
◇ Fourth Grade	Patterns
◇ Fifth Grade	Systems
◇ Sixth Grade	Discoveries
◇ Seventh Grade	Communication
◇ Eighth Grade	Influences
◇ Ninth Grade	Forces
◇ Tenth Grade	Relationships
◇ Eleventh Grade	Conflict
◇ Twelfth Grade	Power

Units of study will be organized around these universal and significant themes. The activities will be of interdisciplinary value and will represent and integrate the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) with more advanced and enriched subject matter. Several models including the Kaplan Model and the *Texas Performance Standards Project* will be utilized in order to provide learning experiences that build understanding of generalizations and problem solving. The curriculum promotes higher order thinking skills, depth and complexity of content, research skills, and advanced products.

The McGee-Keiser curriculum (K – 8) and the *Laying the Foundation* curriculum (6 – 12) also promote differentiated lessons for the gifted students.

Learning Experiences

Students in the United Independent School District have the opportunity to participate in a variety of learning experiences during the course of the year and the summer. These may include, but are not limited to summer camps, programs, or events such as:

- Tech Prep – Links high school with college and careers, allowing students to receive college credit for courses preparing them for careers.
- AHEC – Allied Health Education Center, in coordination with Laredo Community College, sponsors a 2-week college prep seminar.
- UISD Health Science Technology courses enable students to shadow professionals in the medical field.
- TAMU Sponsored Activities – Laredo’s local university, Texas A & M International University, holds a financial aid fair and YES camp, a course for college credit in economics. High school students visit frequently for college preparation events.

- Tex PREP - Texas Pre-freshman Engineering Program offers an opportunity for high-quality local and area middle and high school students to be exposed to college-level mathematics, science and engineering studies.
- LCC Sponsored Activities – Laredo Community College offers college courses for various high schools.
- Science Fair – UISD Regional Science Fair provides an opportunity for GT students to demonstrate their research skills.
- Distance Learning Projects – UISD schools are linked to each other and to select colleges and universities to provide courses via distance learning.
- TAGT Summer Opportunities – Office of GT/AA disseminates information/applications for summer programs provided by the Texas Association of the Gifted and Talented.
- Baylor Medical School (Doc Prep) – Students experience the medical school environment by attending Baylor College of Medicine for five days in the summer.
- UT Health Science Center San Antonio – Med Ed exposes students to medical research through workshops, field trips and various other means.

Staff Development

Professional development is an integral part of the Gifted and Talented Program. Opportunities for professional development are provided through the GT/AA Department, Region One Service Center, TAMU (Texas A & M International University), TAGT (Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented), the College Board, and other conferences/workshops held across the state.

The State of Texas requires the following professional development:

1st Time GT Teachers – All teachers of the gifted must have a minimum of 30 clock hours of training in the following prior to being assigned to teach a gifted and talented class:

- ✓ Nature and Needs of GT Students
- ✓ Social and Emotional Needs of GT Students
- ✓ Identification and Assessment of GT Students
- ✓ Creative and Divergent Thinking
- ✓ Differentiation of Curriculum (2-day training)

In the event that a teacher is unable to attend training prior to the first day of class due to extenuating circumstances, a plan of action should be filed at the campus level indicating how instruction will be differentiated for GT students. At this point, the campus principal becomes responsible for approving and funding alternate training.

**Secondary school teachers assigned to teach GT, Pre-AP, or AP classes may attend a week-long AP Institute in lieu of days 3, 4 and 5 of GT training as specified above.*

Experienced G.T. Teachers – Regardless of initial training route, all GT teachers must receive six hours of professional development in GT topics. The time frame for receiving this training shall be one year – *first day of classes in August to first day of classes in August of the following year.* Attendance at AP or LTF Institutes may satisfy the requirement for GT six-hour updates.

**Teachers completing the thirty-hour initial training the previous school year are not required to take an additional six hours of training during the summer prior to starting the school year.*

Administrators and Counselors – Administrators and counselors responsible for making program decisions must have a minimum of six hours of GT training in Nature and Needs and Program Options.

***Records of all training should be turned in to the GT/AA Department.*

Coordination With Other Programs

In an effort to recognize giftedness in our diverse student population, the GT/AA Department works collaboratively with Directors/Coordinators of the Bilingual and Special Education Departments as well as the Region I Service Center.

Parent and Community Involvement

The success of the Program of Gifted and Talented/ Advanced Academics depends greatly upon the involvement of our students' parents and our local community. The GT/AA Department meets periodically with parents to discuss the needs of GT students and the identification process. A GT Parent Awareness Committee may be formed in order to review program initiatives and to set goals for improvement and enhancement of the program. This committee consists of parent and teacher representatives from our schools.

Parents of GT students are informed through a variety of means such as:

- ✓ GT Brochures
- ✓ GT Handbook
- ✓ The UISD Gifted and Talented/Advanced Academics Webpage
- ✓ Local Newspaper Advertisements
- ✓ Updates of Changes in Legislation
- ✓ Updates of Changes in District Local Policy
- ✓ Informal Meetings at UISD Campuses
- ✓ GT Parent Awareness Committee (GTPAC) Meetings
- ✓ Presentations on the Needs of Gifted Students/Identification Process/Portfolio Development
- ✓ Campus Counselors and Teachers

Parents of Pre-AP and AP students are informed through a variety of means such as:

- ✓ AP Central website: <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>
- ✓ The UISD Gifted and Talented/Advanced Academics Webpage
- ✓ *Bulletin for AP Students and Parents*
- ✓ Advanced Placement (AP) Family Nights
- ✓ Updates of Changes in Legislation
- ✓ Updates of Changes in District Policy
- ✓ Informal Meetings at UISD Campuses
- ✓ Flipcharts
- ✓ GT Parent Awareness Committee (GTPAC) Meetings
- ✓ AP Coordinators, Counselors and Teachers

Evaluation of Student Performance

The impact of the program on student performance is measured in various ways. Effectively trained teachers are the key to our program. Once trained, teachers are observed by the GT Director or Coordinator and receive constructive feedback. If necessary, the GT Director or Coordinator meets with the GT teachers at each campus not only to offer assistance on instructional issues (including the *Texas Performance Standards Project*) but also to keep them abreast of current issues in the GT Program.

Commended student performance on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) is an indicator of student success.

At the high school level, the number of GT students enrolled in AP classes who take AP exams and achieve scores of 3 or above serves as an indicator of student success.

The District GT Director and Coordinator meet with campus administration and GT/Pre-AP/AP teachers to gather input when considering student success in the program. They also collaborate with parents/community members in an effort to provide a more rigorous and authentic GT/AA Program.

Formal Evaluations

Formal evaluations are conducted periodically as needed or as recommended by district auditors and other educational stakeholders.