

THE STATE OF GIFTED EDUCATION IN TEXAS

A Research Study Conducted by

The Research Division of the Texas
Association for the Gifted and Talented

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Introduction

- Culmination of two-year statewide study began in November 2005 by members of the Research Division of TAGT
- Supports the mission of the Research Division: *to support gifted and talented research as a means for advancing identification and services for gifted children, guiding parents of gifted learners, and training teachers of gifted students*
- Aligned with Research Division goal: *to encourage, evaluate, and disseminate current research in the field of gifted education*

Purpose of Study

- Determine the status of gifted education in public school districts in Texas in 2007
- Provide current information of how districts were following *The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students*
- Answer the question: *At what levels are districts in compliance with the regulations established for gifted and talented programs*

History of Legislation of Gifted Education in Texas

- 1977: Texas Legislature passed first legislation related to gifted education
- 1979: state funds provided but services were optional
- 1987: identification and services for gifted children mandated in Texas
- 1990: *The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* adopted (revised in 1996 & 2000)

TEC Chapter 29 Mandates

- Definition of gifted student
 - Exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area
 - Possesses an unusual capacity for leadership
 - Excels in specific academic field
- Mandates identification and services for gifted and talented students
- Requires development and periodic update of a state plan to be used as a guide and for accountability measures

Texas State Plan

- Identification and Assessment
 - Include qualitative and quantitative information from multiple sources
- Program Design
 - Requires gifted students to work with other gifted students, with other students, and independently
- Curriculum and Instruction
 - Must provide an array of learning opportunities, continuum of learning experiences, and opportunities for acceleration
- Professional Development
 - Must have training in nature and needs of gifted students
- Family-Community Involvement
 - Must inform the parents of choices available for the gifted child

DEC Compliance Measures

- Mandatory compliance through on-site visits started in late 1990's
 - Followed guidelines of TAC
 - Accountability of district was inherent in required documentation and evidence
- Funding cuts moved compliance to paper version
- Compliance monitoring ceased with further funding cuts
- Districts are now locally controlled and conduct an annual evaluation within the district
 - Rely on the leadership of gifted/talented education within the district
 - Rely on the level of understanding of the Board of Trustees

Standards and Certification

- Seven standards provide the basis for certification
- Prior to 2000: GT Endorsement to Teacher Certification
 - Required completion of university courses to meet standards
- 2000: GT Supplemental Certification
 - Must pass GT Supplemental TExES Exam
 - No university coursework or training required
- 30 clock hours of training for educators providing services to gifted students

Training

- 30 clock hours of training for educators providing services to gifted students
- 6-hour annual updates required
- 6-hour initial training for administrators and counselors responsible for making gifted/talented program decisions

Recent Legislation

- SB 518, 2001: expanded counselor requirements in all public schools to provide services for gifted populations
- TEC, 42.156: Districts receive funding for each identified gifted student
 - Must be used for program for gifted students, including AP & IB
 - No more than 5% of district's funding is eligible for this special allotment
 - Does provide funding for these programs
 - SBOE allocated up to \$500,00 beyond the 5% for each district for special gifted programs
 - Must be effective and consistent with *The Texas State Plan for Gifted and Talented Education*

Demographic Information

- N = 324 (31%)
- 1,034 regular public school districts in Texas
- 40% central office administrators
- 60% of the respondents reported having a variety of positions, including campus personnel, such as teachers, principals, instructional specialists.

Educational Service Center (ESC) Regions & School Districts

- Most respondents were from ESC 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16, with 20.
- Over half the participants came from 1A and 2A School Districts

Student Assessment

- Districts screen once per year
- Districts use multiple measures

Student Assessment

Most Commonly Reported Measures

- Teacher Checklists,
- Aptitude/Intelligence Tests
- Parent Checklists
- Achievement Tests
- Matrix Approach used by Majority of Districts

Program Design

Most Popular Programming Options

- 1A school districts
 - Differentiation in General Education Pull-out Services
 - Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment
- 2A and 3A School Districts
 - Advanced Placement
 - Dual and/or Concurrent Enrollment
 - Differentiation in General Education
 - Pull-out Services

Program Design

4A/5A School Districts

- Advanced Placement
- Dual/Concurrent Enrollment
- Pull-out Services
- Differentiation in AP
- Pre-AP
- Credit by Exam
- Acceleration
- Classes for the GT in one/more core areas
- Cluster Grouping

Curriculum and Instruction

- 60/280 parallel curriculum
- 48/280 school-wide enrichment model
- “Occasionally” use pre-/post-assessment
- Smaller district the less likely to use pre- and post-assessment

Measurement of Implementation

- Walk-throughs
- Lesson plans
- Professional Development and Appraisal Systems (PDAS)
- GT Report Cards (4A/5A)

Professional Development

- Forty percent of the 280 respondents reported that at least six hours of professional development is required for all administrators
- Only 14% indicated that one administrator per building must take at least six hours of professional development in GT education.

Texas Performance Standards

- The majority of the districts reported not using the TPS

Professional Development

- 70% of the respondents required 30 clock hours and Update Training
- 70% reported that 81-100% of their teachers who teach GT students have completed update training
- Fourteen percent reported that 61-80% had completed training

Professional Development

- Provided by:
 - School District Personnel
 - Regional Service Centers
 - Out of District Consultants (Larger Districts)

Family-Community Involvement

- Districts are disseminating information to parents of elementary school students
- 57% (167/280) are conducting annual program evaluations
- 35% (97/280) evaluate programs every 2-5 years
- 8% (23/280) not evaluating programs

Going Beyond Acceptable

- 173/280 provide parent orientation
- 33% of 280 provide annual updates to parents
- 65% share products/achievements during campus-wide open house
- 33% have data bank of community resources
- GT coordinators have completed 30-hour training
- Gifted and Talented Supplemental Certification held by few teachers

Parent Associations

- 49/280 have parent associations
- 18/49 are TAGT affiliates
- 32/49 have events for GT families
- 19/49 have newsletters
- 15/49 have websites

Conclusions

- Specific to Student Assessment, districts are using multiple measures and screening at least once a year.
- Districts report meeting the program design criteria by offering a wide range of program options and ensuring students work independently, with other GT students, and with non-GT students.
- Almost all districts report requiring teachers of the gifted to complete the mandated 30 clock hours of training which falls under professional development.
- Districts are disseminating identification information to parents and informing them of learning opportunity for their children.

Conclusions

- There are districts that are not assessing students using nonverbal measures or in their home languages.
- A small number of responses indicated there were no policies or a lack of knowledge of policies that pertain to furlough, reassessment, exit, transfer, and appeals.
- The lack of participation in the Texas State Performance Standards is an area for improvement.
- Professional development and training of teachers, administrators, counselors is an area for improvement.

Conclusions

- Districts need to begin conducting annual GT program evaluations.
- GT programs that strive to meet the criteria for Recognized and Exemplary status should be applauded.
- Districts not meeting the acceptable criteria need direction and support.
- Local accountability alone is not sufficient to ensure compliance.
- Districts need to be held accountable for meeting the standards outlined in the Texas State Plan.