

August 24, 2020

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Texas Education Agency Response to Texas Association for Gifted/Talented Stakeholder Questions for Serving G/T Students in 2020-2021 School Year

Dear Paulina,

Thank you for your request for guidance regarding gifted and talented student support during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have responded to each of your inquiries below. The Department of Special Populations will soon be releasing a Gifted and Talented FAQ that will address these questions and more. Please do not hesitate to contact us if there is anything else your organization may need. Thank you for your work in supporting the gifted and talented student population of Texas.

- Per House Bill 3, Sec 29.124, each school district shall annually certify to the commissioner that the district has established a program for gifted and talented students, that the program is consistent with the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students, and the use of funds on the district's program for G/T students. How will this be implemented during the 2020-2021 school year?
 - *LEAs will continue to follow the certification process implemented in 2019-2020.*
 - *Identify and serve G/T students*
 - *Identify LEA G/T program service options*
 - *Report the use of G/T funds*
 - *Submit the plan for G/T services in all learning platforms*
 - *The agency will roll out the next phase of the certification process as a pilot with LEA trainings for full implementation in 2021-2022.*
- In what section of the remote learning plan should districts include their remote learning plans for G/T services?
 - *The phrase "students with additional learning needs" includes gifted/talented students.*
- How will guidance documents ensure that in-person and remote students can continue to be pulled out from their classes for G/T services and/or clustered in similar ability groups for instruction?

- *As evidence of services, LEAs may report the pull-out schedule for G/T educators. Full inclusion programs may document cluster grouping in their virtual learning plans.*
- *The reporting of actual student participation will need to be determined at the local level.*
- Will curriculum and lessons provided by Texas Home Learning 3.0 include G/T education strategies such as depth and complexity and higher-level questioning? Also, will the Texas Performance Standards Project and access to more challenging curriculum be easily accessible in this resource as an option for serving gifted students?
 - *Yes, Texas Home Learning 3.0 will include G/T strategies and supports. The Texas Performance Standards Project will be linked to THL 3.0 as an optional resource to meet the State Plan standards.*
 - *THL 3.0 will make available all high-quality instructional material for teachers of the gifted to adapt to the unique needs of their learners.*
- Per TEA guidance, many districts postponed or delayed G/T testing for identification during the spring 2020 semester. What guidance will be provided for ensuring equitable access to identification for services this year and for identification in spring 2021?
 - *TEA is developing additional guidance regarding identification of students for G/T services.*
 - Can districts require in-person testing on school or non-school days?
 - *If or when a student is referred for G/T identification, an LEA must offer both in-person and virtual identification process sites to accommodate the student population. They may offer them on non-school days. LEAs must communicate all testing options that are available to families.*
 - The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students allows for assessment modifications for student exceptionalities (Section 2.17). During COVID-19, can TEA clarify that remote learning constitutes a student exceptionality for the purposes of identifying students and providing assessment modifications?
 - *Remote learning is not a student exceptionality. LEAs may modify the assessment process for remote learning. LEAs are to provide the same accommodations and modifications through remote instruction.*
- In light of the flexibility parents have to move students between in-person and remote learning, how will districts keep track of which G/T students are served by in- person and/or remote services?
 - *LEAs may have teachers and G/T coordinators take attendance of services provided and report to district leadership.*

Thank you again for your inquiry. We wish you a safe and healthy start of the school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Morath". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education