

Gifted and Talented Audit Report

Prepared for:
Fort Bend Independent
School District

April 2022

Submitted By:

Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.
1801 South Mopac Expressway, Suite 270
Austin, Texas 78746
+512.328.0884
www.gibsonconsult.com

GIBSON

AN EDUCATION CONSULTING & RESEARCH GROUP

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	1
Audit Summary	1
Audit Objectives and Scope	4
Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management.....	4
Student Identification.....	4
Program Design and Implementation	5
Family and Community Involvement.....	5
Approach and Methodology.....	5
Extant Data Analysis and Benchmarking.....	5
Individual and Group Interviews.....	6
Student and Parent Surveys	7
Chapter 2 – Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management	11
Background.....	11
Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students	11
Fort Bend ISD Policy Framework.....	12
GT Program Mission and Core Beliefs	13
GT Department Organizational Structure and Staffing	14
Program Expenditures	17
Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations.....	18
Chapter 3 – Student Identification.....	37
Fort Bend ISD GT Student Profile	37
GT Student Identification Process in Fort Bend ISD	44
Referral.....	45

Assessment.....	45
Identification	46
Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations.....	46
Chapter 4 – Program Design and Implementation	59
Fort Bend ISD GT Service Design and Delivery Model.....	59
GT Student Survey Results	61
Elementary GT Student Survey Results	62
Secondary GT Student Survey Results	66
Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations.....	71
Chapter 5 – Family and Community Involvement.....	80
GT Parent Survey Results.....	80
Student Identification.....	80
Program Communications.....	81
Program Quality	84
Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations.....	87
Appendix A – Interview Roster	A-1
Interviews.....	A-1
Focus Groups	A-1
Appendix B – Elementary GT Student Survey	B-1
Appendix C – Secondary GT Student Survey	C-1
Appendix D – Parent Survey	D-1

Chapter 1 – Introduction

In January 2021, Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. (Gibson), as part of its continuing contract to provide internal auditing services for the Fort Bend Independent School District (herein referred to as “Fort Bend ISD” or “the District”) Board of Trustees, initiated a Gifted and Talented (GT) Audit. Gibson wishes to thank the Fort Bend ISD leadership and staff for their assistance in conducting this audit and the Board Audit Committee (BAC) for overseeing this important work.

This introductory Chapter provides a summary of the audit findings and recommendations, a description of the audit objectives and scope, and Gibson’s approach and methodology for conducting the audit.

Audit Summary

Three years ago, in 2017-18, a GT Task Force was established to conduct a comprehensive review of the District’s GT program. The work of the Task Force culminated into a five-year plan to not only bring the GT program into compliance with the State Plan, but to also develop an exemplary program for providing instruction and services to students that have been identified for GT services. Since that time, Fort Bend ISD has implemented many program enhancements, including the creation of a GT Department, for which it is commended. Several of the commendations highlighted in this audit are described below:

- The Five-Year Task Maps continue to serve as an internal guiding document for accomplishing the GT Department’s short- and long-term initiatives. The GT Task Force (now referred to as the GT Implementation Team) meets regularly to plan, organize, and support the implementation of priority initiatives. As new programs and services are developed, they are piloted at select grade levels and campuses in order to collect feedback and make needed adjustments prior to implementing them districtwide.
- To address the long-term pattern of underrepresentation of Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students in the GT program, the GT Department implemented the research-based strategies of universal screening and local norming to the identification and assessment process. Further, a centralized approach for reviewing all student referrals and Level 2 appeals helps to ensure that the GT student identification process is implemented consistently and equitably across campuses.
- Recent efforts have been made to improve communications with schools and families about the GT program, such as updating content on the District and campus websites, publishing monthly and quarterly newsletters, and sharing updates using social media. The GT Department is also commended for providing an array of opportunities to engage parents and community members in the GT program (particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic), such as the GT Family Challenge Series and the GT Symposium.

The process of improving programs and services for GT students in Fort Bend ISD is ongoing. This audit identified several areas where the District is not yet in compliance with the State Plan, as well as other

areas that are still in need of improvement. Some of the more significant findings and recommendations included in this audit are presented below:

- The role of the central office is to provide the resources, supports, and accountability structures to facilitate campuses implementing GT programs and services with fidelity. To this end, the GT Department is not currently staffed at a level to enable effective management and oversight of program resources. Accomplishing all of the initiatives outlined in the Task Map may require additional staffing resources.
- Several of the business processes essential to the work of the GT Department are inefficient due to use of disparate and/or inadequate information systems. Three findings in this audit report center around issues related to inefficient processes associated with 1) monitoring compliance with the State's requirements for GT training requirements; 2) managing student referrals, assessments, and identification; and, 3) tracking student furloughs, exits, and transfers. Addressing these issues through system enhancements, or through the procurement of an integrated software application to manage all aspects of GT programming, would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the GT Department.
- The audit team identified three areas of non-compliance with the State Plan. First, the GT Department is currently coding some non-allowable teacher salary expenditures to Program Intent Code (PIC) 21, the account code used to track the use of funds for GT programs and services. Discontinuing this practice will not only ensure compliance, but it will also provide a truer picture of District spending on the GT program. Second, the State Plan requires that the Trustees receive training annually related to GT program accountability. Although this has not yet happened, it is planned to take place in Spring 2022. Lastly, a review of a sample of campus improvement plans (CIPs) found that references to GT are not included in many of them, as required by the State Plan.
- Despite recent initiatives aimed at increasing representation of economically disadvantaged and minority students in the GT population (e.g., universal screening and local norming), data show that underrepresentation continues to remain a challenge for the District. Recommendations include strategies aimed at increasing referrals made by campus administrators, teachers, and other instructional staff, as well as adjustments to the referral timeline. The audit team also recommended several strategies for improving the fidelity with which the Vistas Talent Pool program is being implemented.
- Qualitative feedback gathered through interviews and GT student and parent survey responses suggests that programs and services at the elementary level are not being implemented with fidelity. Recommendations are aimed at the two levers that will improve program fidelity: 1) the provision of ongoing and job-embedded professional development for GT-trained teachers; and 2) improved support and accountability structures for campus administrators. At the secondary level, GT programs and services have historically been limited to the open enrollment pre-Advanced Placement (AP) and AP courses, and a GT mentorship program. This has contributed to a wide perception amongst students, staff, and parents that GT services "go away" after elementary school. The Department is in the early stages of planning and piloting additional service options, which includes GT-specific pre-AP and AP courses, independent study courses, and expansion of the GT mentorship program. As with programs and services at the elementary level, ensuring

campuses are supported through ongoing professional learning and tools and systems to provide for monitoring and feedback are essential to ensuring that campuses are implementing the service components with fidelity.

Table 1 provides a complete list of the recommendations resulting from this audit. Each recommendation has been assigned a priority level based on perceived risk and/or impact to the organization.

Table 1. Summary of Audit Recommendations

No.	Priority	Recommendation
1	Medium	Update Policy EHBB (LOCAL) to align with the nomenclature in the State Plan.
2	Medium	Increase GT Department staff to support the priority initiatives in the Task Map that are focused on meeting the State Plan requirements.
3	High	Ensure only allowable expenditures are reported to PIC 21.
4	High	Provide training to the Board of Trustees as required by the State Plan.
5	High	Improve accountability for GT student achievement and growth by ensuring that the provision of programs and services for GT students is adequately addressed in all CIPs, as required by the State Plan.
6	High	Streamline GT administrative processes through the implementation of an integrated program management software application.
7	Medium	Support campus administrators in program implementation with improved communications and targeted training.
8	Medium	Implement system enhancements to further streamline the identification process and improve reporting capabilities.
9	Medium	Implement strategies to increase the number of GT referrals made by campus administrators and staff.
10	Medium	Adjust the GT referral timeline.
11	Medium	Increase support and accountability structures to ensure campuses are implementing the Vistas Talent Pool program with fidelity.
12	Medium	Improve the fidelity with which the GT programs and services are implemented at elementary schools through the provision of job-embedded professional development supports for teachers and improved monitoring protocols for campus administrators.
13	Medium	Provide GT students at the secondary level with a full continuum of services based on program goals.
14	Medium	Enhance the District's program design model to better support the affective development of GT students.
15	Medium	Engage campus administrators and staff in GT PAC recruitment efforts.
16	High	Improve communications with parents of GT students through districtwide implementation of the GTLPs.

Audit Objectives and Scope

The primary objective of this audit is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the GT Department in order to better meet the needs of the District's GT students. The scope of this audit focused on answering the following questions:

Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management

- Does the GT Department organizational structure adhere to the principles of effective organizational design with respect to the logical alignment of key functions, spans of control, and organizational leveling?
- Are central office staffing levels both sufficient and efficient for the effective management of GT program resources?
- Are processes and procedures established to centrally monitor the fidelity with which GT programs and services are implemented across campuses?
- Does the District have an ongoing professional learning program to ensure all GT teachers receive or present evidence of the required 30-hour training that includes nature and needs, identification and assessment, and curriculum and instruction? Does this program also ensure that GT teachers receive or present evidence of the required six-hour annual 'update' of professional learning related to serving gifted and talented students? Do all GT administrators and counselors receive the required six-hour training that includes nature and needs?

Student Identification

- Referring – What percent of students referred for evaluation are the result of universal screening procedures, parent referrals, or other referral methods? How do these percentages vary across campuses and subgroup populations? Do campuses actively promote the referral process to teachers and parents? Are parents and teachers provided with the appropriate forms to nominate potential students?
- Screening – Do teachers employ consistent methods for universally screening students across a single grade level? Are at least three pieces of criteria (preferably five), including both qualitative measures and quantitative measures, incorporated into the screening process? What percent of students are referred for evaluation, and how do these percentages vary across campuses and student subgroups?
- Assessing – What data are collected about student's aptitudes, performance, behaviors, and interests? Are multiple criteria utilized? Are assessments nationally and/or locally normed? Are longitudinal data collected and maintained for each student? Are campuses compliant with securing parental consent to evaluate a student for gifted services? Are culturally-sensitive assessments and processes used to prevent language and cultural differences from creating bias in the identification process?

- **Selecting** – Have all employees on the selection committee received the required GT training? Do special education evaluation teams include GT evaluation staff when both a disability and giftedness are suspected? How are placement decisions made by the central office identification/placement committee? Is there a “safety net” in the identification process to more closely look at students who narrowly miss being identified as GT?
- **Appealing** – Are parents appropriately notified regarding their rights to appeal the committee’s decision? Who participates on the appeals committee? What percentage of ineligibility decisions are appealed? What percent of appeals are filed within the required 10-day timeline? Are policies and procedures transparent to parents?

Program Design and Implementation

- **Program Service Design** – What service delivery models are employed across the District’s elementary schools (pullout, cluster, or push-in)? What models are employed at middle and high schools? What opportunities exist for acceleration and advanced programming? Do all students have equal access to GT programs and services, no matter which school they attend? What are the student retention rates in GT programs?
- **Curriculum and Instruction** – Do students have access to a high-quality curriculum that is appropriately differentiated for GT students? Are research-based instructional strategies utilized across campuses? Do all GT teachers have access to high-quality instructional materials and other resources? What evidence exists to document positive student performance trends for students participating in the program?

Family and Community Involvement

- **Family and Community Involvement** – What outreach efforts are employed to strengthen family and community involvement in the District’s GT programs? Is social media utilized effectively to keep parents and community members informed?
- **Satisfaction** – How satisfied are parents with the District’s GT programs and services? What perceptions exist by various stakeholder groups regarding the equity of access to the District’s GT program?

Approach and Methodology

The findings and recommendations included in this audit report were informed by the following data collection and analytical activities.

Extant Data Analysis and Benchmarking

Gibson collected and analyzed more than 200 documents and data files for the 2016-17 through 2020-21 academic years. Below is a summary of the information provided to the review team:

- **Gifted and Talented Program** – Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and legal frameworks, Board policies, GT Handbook, program planning documents, prior audit reports, expenditure data, program/service descriptions, and other artifacts;
- **Students** – Enrollment and demographic data, referral data, assessment data, and appeals data;
- **Employees** – Organizational charts, job descriptions, position rosters, and professional development offerings and participation; and,
- **Schools** – Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs), school report cards, and school enrollment and demographic data.

Gibson also referenced the accountability standards and exemplary practices put forth in the *Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students* (State Plan).¹

To provide additional context, Gibson benchmarked Fort Bend ISD to six districts that are similar in size, student demographics, and overall performance (see Table 2). Gibson's benchmarking analysis relied exclusively on publicly available information from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and district websites. It is important to note that Gibson conducts benchmark analyses to provide context and does not draw conclusions based on any singular benchmark or indicator.

Table 2. Profile of Benchmark Districts, 2020-21

District	Enrollment	Pct. Eco Dis	Pct. GT
CONROE ISD	64,563	39.8%	8.3%
FORT BEND ISD	76,735	42.3%	6.9%
HUMBLE ISD	45,528	40.4%	7.6%
KATY ISD	84,176	34.4%	8.4%
KLEIN ISD	52,824	49.6%	5.9%
NORTH EAST ISD	60,483	49.9%	7.7%
SPRING BRANCH ISD	33,288	57.0%	10.8%

Source: <https://txschools.gov/districts> and Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2020-21

Individual and Group Interviews

During the Spring of 2021, the audit team conducted nine individual interviews with GT Department staff and central office administrators. The audit team also conducted 12 group interviews with elementary and secondary school principals, GT administrators, GT-trained teachers, parents of students in the GT program, GT students, counselors, and other school-based staff. The primary objective of the individual and group interviews was to gather information about the District's GT programs and services, and to solicit feedback from different groups of stakeholders regarding their perceptions of program strengths and areas in need of improvement. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted remotely via *Zoom*.

¹ Last updated April 2019.

A complete list of interviewees and types of group interviews can be found in this report in *Appendix A – Interview Roster*.

Student and Parent Surveys

As part of this audit, Gibson developed and administered two student surveys and one parent survey to collect feedback regarding student learning experiences and parent perceptions of the District's GT program and services. Gibson's approach to administering the surveys, along with the survey response rates, are described below. Gibson also provides some qualifying information to guide the interpretation of survey response statistics.

Student Surveys

Gibson developed and administered two GT student surveys – one for GT students in Grades 3, 4, and 5, and one for GT students in Grades 6 through 12 – to gather information about their educational experiences and perceptions of Fort Bend ISD's GT program and services. The student survey instruments are included in *Appendix B – Elementary GT Student Survey* and *Appendix C – Secondary GT Student Survey* of this report.

Elementary GT students were administered a paper survey, while secondary GT students were asked to complete an online survey. The Champion of Gifted Services (COGS) on each campus were responsible for distributing and collecting the paper surveys, as well as for providing secondary students with the URL to access the online survey.

In total, 710 elementary GT students, 513 middle school GT students, and 286 high school GT students responded to the survey, for overall response rates of 39 percent, 32.5 percent, and 14.6 percent, respectively. Response rates varied widely across campuses, and nine of the 77 campuses did not have any GT students respond to the survey. Table 3 below shows the distribution of survey response rates across the District's elementary, middle, and high schools.

Table 3. Distribution of GT Survey Response Rates by School Level

School GT Student Survey Response Rates	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
No Responses	7	1	1
Less than 25%	10	3	6
25-50%	19	5	3
50-75%	13	3	0
Greater than 75%	2	3	1
Total Campuses	51	15	11

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Parent Survey

Gibson administered a survey to all Fort Bend ISD parents of GT students to better understand their overall satisfaction with the GT programs and services their child receives. Parents were emailed a link to an online survey and District records were used to link parent responses to student demographic data. Parents with more than one child identified as gifted were asked to respond to the survey based on their experience with their oldest child. The parent survey instrument is included in this report in *Appendix D – Parent Survey*.

In total, 1,925 parents responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 23.8 percent. Table 4 below details parent response rates by school level.

Table 4. Parent Survey Response Rates by School Level

School Level	Total Parents Surveyed by School Level of Oldest GT Child	Response Rate
Elementary School	2,477	33.1%
Middle School	2,277	25.9%
High School	3,328	15.5%
Total	8,082	23.8%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

To discern if there are any notable differences in parent responses based on student demographics, Gibson also disaggregated and analyzed parent survey responses according to their child's socioeconomic status (SES) (Table 5) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status (Table 6).

Table 5. Parent Survey Response Rate by Socioeconomic Status

Child Socioeconomic Status	Total Parents Surveyed	Response Rate
Non-Eco Dis	7,192	24.0%
Eco Dis	890	22.7%
Total	8,082	23.8%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Table 6. Parent Survey Response Rate by Child's LEP Status

Child LEP Status	Total Parents Surveyed	Response Rate
Non-LEP	7,772	23.4%
LEP	310	33.2%
Total	8,082	23.8%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Interpreting Survey Response Data

A survey response rate is defined as the number of people in the sample who successfully complete the survey. Having a high survey response rate is important, as it is more likely that the responses are representative of the total population of interest. In theory, response rates can range anywhere from zero percent to 100 percent, although most literature suggests that average response rates tend to fall between 20 and 30 percent, and that response rates below 10 percent are considered very low, while response rates above 50 percent are considered very good.² In general, there are a variety of factors that can influence survey response rates, such as the survey itself (e.g., survey type, clarity of instructions, question wording, length of survey), respondents (e.g., motivation to complete the survey, invitation to complete the survey), or survey management (e.g., confidence of anonymity, reminder emails, and follow-up).

Gibson makes every effort to facilitate high survey response rates. For this audit, all survey instruments were vetted by GT Department administrators to ensure that survey instructions, question wording and format, as well as survey length were both content- and age-appropriate; automated reminder emails were sent to non-respondents (parent online survey only); and 100 percent of the GT student (Grades 3-12) and GT parent population was surveyed (as opposed to a sample population). Despite these efforts, some limitations inherent in the survey administration effort may have contributed to lower survey response rates. For example, reliance on the COGS to distribute paper surveys and/or URLs to GT students was determined (in collaboration with the GT Department) to be the best approach given the fact that GT students needed to be individually identified at each campus and many students were still learning remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, student surveys were administered at the end of the school year, in May 2021, which is a very busy time of year for both students and staff. Nine campuses did not have any GT students respond to the survey, which means that some campuses are not represented at all in the student survey results.

For these reasons and more, the results of the student and parent surveys presented in this audit should be interpreted with caution. Results are not intended to be statistically significant or even representative of the entire population of interest. The survey results are simply meant to show patterns in response to a variety of questions about the District's GT programs and services by those individuals that completed the survey.

The remainder of this report is organized into the following chapters and appendices:

- Chapter 2 – Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management
- Chapter 3 – Student Identification
- Chapter 4 – Program Design and Implementation
- Chapter 5 – Family and Community Involvement

² <https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/research/tools-increase-response-rate/>.

- Appendices
 - Appendix A – Interview Roster
 - Appendix B – Elementary GT Student Survey
 - Appendix C – Secondary GT Student Survey
 - Appendix D – Parent Survey

Chapter 2 – Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management

This Chapter provides an overview of the legal and policy framework of the GT Program in Fort Bend ISD, and assesses how efficiently and effectively the Department is organized, staffed, and managed in order to support the delivery of high-quality instruction to GT students. The key themes that emerged from this Chapter are summarized below.

- Through the work of a GT Task Force (now referred to as the GT Implementation Team), the GT Department has an aggressive five-year plan to not only bring the GT program into compliance with the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students (State Plan), but to develop an exemplary program for providing instruction and services to students that have been identified as GT.
- Potential barriers related to staffing and program management that may inhibit program improvements include:
 - Insufficient staff to support campuses in implementing the GT program with consistency and fidelity;
 - Inaccurate reporting of allowable program expenditures;
 - Disparate information systems that make it difficult to ensure compliance with the State Plan GT training requirements; and,
 - Ineffective processes for communicating information about the GT programming to campus administrators.

Background

Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students

The Texas definition of gifted and talented is a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who:³

- Exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- Possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- Excels in a specific academic field.

³ Texas Education Code §29.121.

The State Goal for GT students states, “*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.*”

The State Plan includes standards for recommended and exemplary performance in six areas. These standards are intended to guide school districts in implementing state policy expectations and best practices for gifted/talented programming.⁴

1. **Fidelity of Services** – School districts comply with gifted/talented accountability standards and monitor the effectiveness of assessment and services for gifted/talented students.
2. **Student Assessment** – Gifted/talented assessment procedures and progress monitoring allow students to demonstrate and develop their diverse talents and abilities.
3. **Service Design** – A flexible system of viable service options provides a research-based learning continuum that is developed and consistently implemented throughout the district to meet the needs and reinforce the strengths and interests of gifted/talented students.
4. **Curriculum and Instruction** – Districts meet the needs of gifted/talented students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school.
5. **Professional Learning** – All personnel involved in the planning, creation, delivery, and administration of services to gifted/talented students possess the knowledge required to develop and provide differentiated programs and services.
6. **Family/Community Involvement** – The district involves family and community members in services designed for gifted/talented students throughout the school year.

Fort Bend ISD Policy Framework

Fort Bend ISD maintains all Board policies in the online Board Policy Manual on the District’s website at <http://pol.tasb.org/Home/Index/483>. LEGAL policies contain compilations of federal law, State law, and court decisions as statutory context in which all other policies are to be read, while LOCAL policies are policies adopted by the Fort Bend ISD Board of Trustees and reflect the decisions of the Board regarding the educational needs of students and the priorities and values of the community. EXHIBITS contain forms, charts, or other types of supporting information for these policies. Gibson identified two LEGAL Board policies and one LOCAL Board policy that are connected to the GT Program. A brief summary of these policies is listed below.

⁴ https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/GT_State_Plan_2019_1.pdf.

- *Policy AE (LEGAL) Educational Philosophy* – Requires the board to adopt a vision statement and comprehensive goals for the district and the superintendent. This policy also outlines the State's mission, goals, and objectives for public education.
- *Policy AE (LOCAL) Educational Philosophy* – Communicates the educational philosophy of the District, which is "to honor the mission, vision, and core beliefs and commitments while meeting District goals through scalable systems that operate with effective change management." Two concepts that support Fort Bend ISD's educational philosophy and are fundamental to the District's core business of teaching and learning are: 1) unbiased, aligned, written, taught, tested, and relevant curriculum; and 2) leadership development of students and staff. The Core Beliefs and Commitments and the Profile of a Graduate articulated in this policy should serve as a framework to guide District planning. This policy was last updated July 12, 2017.
- *Policy EHBB (LEGAL) Special Programs Gifted and Talented Students* – Requires that a district establish a process for identifying and serving gifted and talented students and establish a program for those students in each grade level. This policy defines a "gifted and talented student" to mean "a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a 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." This policy also outlines requirements regarding student identification, the provision of an array of learning opportunities, and the certification that the district's program is in alignment with the State Plan.
- *Policy EHBB (LOCAL) Special Programs Gifted and Talented Students* – Requires that the District institute an equitable gifted and talented program, which shall include an identification process to ensure student representation across all populations; the Superintendent shall establish administrative procedures for the gifted and talented program, admissions, furlough, and exit procedures; and, the District shall provide opportunities for parents to learn about giftedness and best practices for meeting the needs of gifted students. This policy further specifies the Board's expectations regarding program admission; nomination; parental consent; identification; selection, including newly enrolled students; assessment; reassessment; parental notification; learning opportunities; furlough; and, provisions for program exit, reentry, and appeals. This policy was last updated September 12, 2018.
- *Policy DMA (LEGAL) Professional Development – Required Staff Development* – Specifies training requirements for teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the GT program and for administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions.

GT Program Mission and Core Beliefs

In alignment with the Texas State Goal for Services for Gifted and Talented Students, the mission of the Fort Bend ISD GT program is *to provide learning opportunities that challenge and develop students identified for gifted services through creative, self-directed learning*. This can be seen through the development of innovative projects and performances that reflect students' individuality, as well as through honed research skills and advanced critical thinking.

Gifted and Talented services are educational interventions for students who perform at or show the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment. The Fort Bend ISD GT program supports the following core beliefs:

- GT children and youth exist within all ethnic and socio-economic groups.
- GT students' needs are best met through the collaboration of students, educators, parents and community members.
- GT students require differentiated curriculum in an appropriate program to meet their unique needs and to reach their potential.
- Schools promote intellectual growth by providing challenging and demanding learning experiences for GT students that lead to the development of advanced-level products.

GT Department Organizational Structure and Staffing

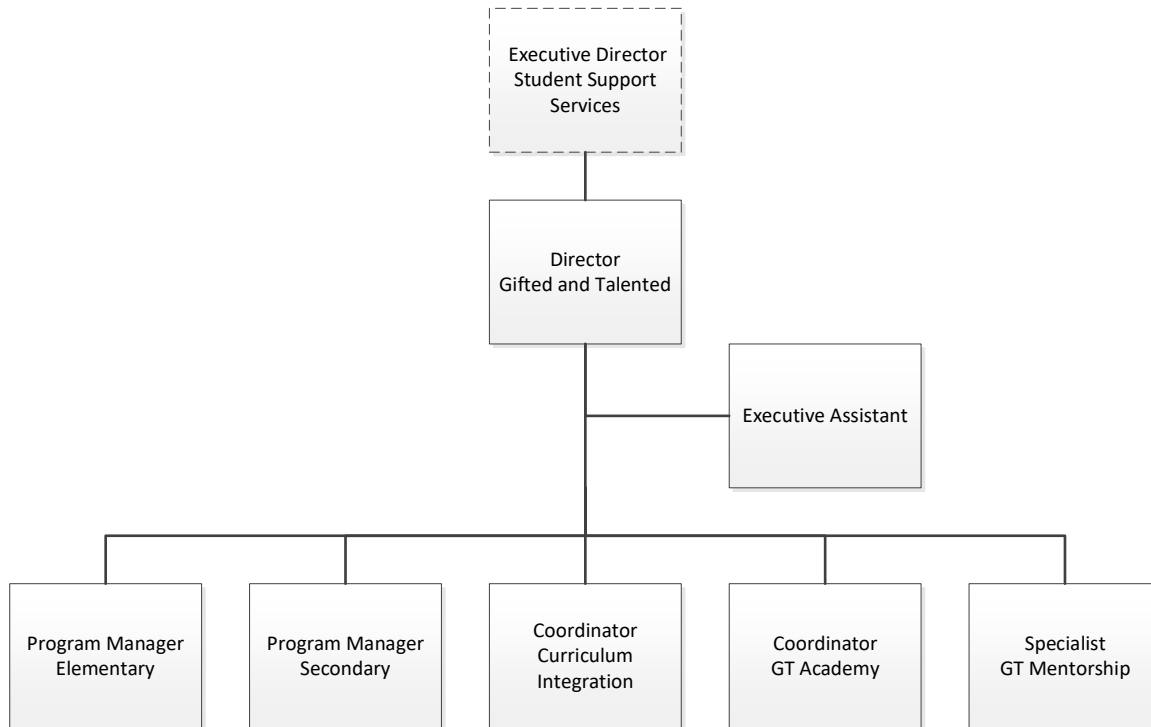
The GT Department in Fort Bend ISD is led by a Director of Gifted and Talented who reports to the Executive Director of Student Support Services within the Academic Affairs Department. The Director is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the GT Department, to include the development and implementation of GT programs, curriculum, and student learning opportunities. Additionally, the Director is responsible for program budgeting, staffing, professional development, program management, development, and implementation. Other duties include:⁵

- Leading the design, development, and revision of the EC-12 curriculum, instructional supports, and assessments within the learning management system to support the GT program;
- Leading, designing, coordinating, and delivering professional learning and presentations for GT teachers, administrators, and parents or other stakeholders to build capacity of District personnel and create positive working relationships with the community;
- Directing the communication, management, and enrollment process for the GT program;
- Creating, sustaining, or expanding student GT learning opportunities to promote equity and access for all students in Fort Bend ISD;
- Leading the development of a department budget based on the State pupil entitlement and local funds; administering the budget based on alignment to District priorities; and, ensuring operations are cost effective and managed wisely; and,
- Formulating and supporting attainment of data-driven goals to support the development of the District Strategic Plan, District Improvement Plan, and corresponding CIPs aligned to the District's vision for Teaching and Learning.

⁵ Director of Gifted and Talented Job Description.

The organizational chart for the Gifted and Talented Department is presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Fort Bend ISD Gifted and Talented Department Organizational Chart, 2021



Source: Fort Bend ISD

Five positions (excluding the Executive Assistant) report to the Director of Gifted and Talented:

- The **Elementary and Secondary Program Managers** are responsible for planning, developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the instructional standards, curriculum, and identification for the GT program in their specified grades.
- The **Curriculum Integration Coordinator** is responsible for the development, management, and integration of District curriculum, instructional priorities, teacher and administrator professional learning, and identification of recommended resources for the assigned program area. This position is also responsible for facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating the integration of Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) within current K-12 content units, and providing training and support for the TPSP implementation.
- The **GT Academy Coordinator** is responsible for promoting, planning, developing, implementing, and monitoring all aspects of the GT Academy, which is located at the Quail Valley Middle School (QVMS).
- The **GT Mentorship Specialist** is responsible for promoting, planning, implementing, and monitoring the GT Mentorship Program, which is an instructional program and related educational services for a select group of high school seniors.

Other school-based positions that support the delivery of instruction to GT students include:

- **Teachers**, who are required by Texas law to receive 30 hours of training in gifted education to be eligible to teach GT students, and must receive six hours of training yearly to maintain that eligibility. In Texas, GT certification, which involves taking and passing the TExES GT Supplemental 162 exam, is not required in order to be qualified to teach in a gifted program.
- **Champions of Gifted Services (COGS)**, are classroom teachers that champion gifted services by attending monthly GT Department meetings to support the consistency of District goals; facilitating trainings and monitoring implementation of TPSP to ensure consistent implementation of the program on their campus; communicating the District's expectations with campus administration and teachers; and, informing the school community about campus and District gifted opportunities by crafting campus announcements, posting flyers, and contributing to school newsletters. Teachers apply for this position and receive a \$750 per semester (\$1,500 annual) stipend for assuming these additional responsibilities. At this time, every campus has one COGS position; however, beginning in 2021-22, campuses with more than 200 identified GT students will have two COGS positions.
- The **GT Counselor** serves as the lead of the Campus Selection Committee (CSC) and coordinates the student assessment and selection process. The role of the GT Counselor is typically assumed by the campus Guidance Counselor or Testing Coordinator.
- The role of the **GT Administrator** is typically assumed by an Assistant Principal. In this capacity, GT Administrators coordinate with the COGS to oversee the implementation of the GT program on their campus; participate on the GT Campus Selection Committee; and, ensure that staff receive the required GT training to maintain compliance.

Over the past four years, Department staffing in the central office increased from five full-time employees (FTEs) to seven FTEs (Table 7). At this same time, school-based staffing (i.e., teachers) decreased 151.2 FTEs. This decrease in the number of teacher FTEs reflects a change in practice by the Department in 2019-20 from assigning all Advanced Placement (AP) and Pre-AP teachers at the secondary level to Program Intent Code (PIC) 21 (the State code for reporting the funds used on GT programming), to assigning only Pre-AP and AP and teachers at middle schools to PIC 21. The change was made to correctly reflect the fact that AP and Pre-AP courses at high schools are open enrollment (i.e., available to all students), and therefore should not be coded to PIC 21. (This issue is addressed further in Finding 3 below.)

Table 7. Gifted and Talented Program* FTEs, 2018-21

Position	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Director	-	1.0	1.0	1.0
Executive Assistant	1.0	1.0	-	1.0
Program Manager	-	-	2.0	3.0
Coordinator	3.0	2.0	1.0	1.0
GT Mentorship Teacher/Specialist	1.0	-	1.0	1.0
Total Central Office FTEs	5.0	4.0	5.0	7.0

Position	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Teacher	281.5	267.4	133.0	130.3
Total FTEs	283.5	269.4	137.9	137.3

Source: Fort Bend ISD Position Data

* Central office FTEs include positions coded to PIC 21 (Gifted and Talented) and PIC 99 (Undistributed).

Program Expenditures

Table 8 below presents annual operating expenditures for PIC 21 by Object Code, or type of expenditure, from 2015-16 to 2019-20. Over this five-year period, total GT program expenditures decreased \$7.2 million, or 40.6 percent. This decrease reflects the discontinuation of assigning expenditures associated with high school AP and Pre-AP teachers in 2018-19 to PIC 21, as described previously.

Table 8. Fort Bend ISD General Fund Expenditures, Gifted and Talented (PIC 21), 2016-20

Object	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
6100 Payroll Cost	\$17,342,824	\$19,228,371	\$20,257,256	\$10,709,118	\$10,230,521
6200 Professional and Contracted Services	\$29,394	\$50,260	\$43,099	\$34,592	\$20,483
6300 Supplies and Materials	\$174,935	\$164,465	\$146,618	\$140,510	\$157,783
6400 Other Operating Costs	\$91,185	\$87,683	\$104,766	\$83,003	\$63,410
Total Expenditures	\$17,638,338	\$19,530,779	\$20,551,739	\$10,967,223	\$10,472,197
Pct. Change	-	10.7%	5.2%	-46.6%	-4.5%

Source: Fort Bend ISD expenditure data

Compared to benchmark districts, Fort Bend ISD has significantly higher program expenditures per student, driven by Object 6100 Payroll Cost. Although per student program expenditures for other Object Codes varies across districts, Fort Bend ISD is more in line in these categories.

Table 9. General Fund Expenditures (PIC 21) per GT Student, 2019-20

Object	Conroe	Fort Bend	Humble	Katy	Klein	North East	Spring Branch
6100 Payroll Cost	\$270	\$2,466	\$390	\$557	\$348	\$579	\$634
6200 Professional and Contracted Services	\$0	\$11	\$6	\$2	\$37	\$9	\$7
6300 Supplies and Materials	\$39	\$42	\$13	\$18	\$58	\$22	\$41
6400 Other Operating Costs	\$6	\$18	\$6	\$6	\$46	\$2	\$18
Total Spend per GT Student	\$315	\$2,537	\$415	\$583	\$489	\$612	\$700
Total GT Students	4,945	5,286	3,180	6,722	2,854	4,929	3,474

Source: Fort Bend ISD expenditure data

Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations

Finding 1: The nomenclature used in Fort Bend ISD Policy EHBB (LOCAL) is not aligned to the more widely-accepted nomenclature used in the State Plan, contributing to misperceptions about GT students and programming.

Policy EHBB (LOCAL) Special Programs Gifted and Talented Students requires that the District institute an equitable gifted and talented program, which is to include an identification process to ensure student representation across all populations. It also requires that the Superintendent establish administrative procedures for the gifted and talented program, admissions, furlough, and exit procedures; and, that the District provide opportunities for parents to learn about giftedness and best practices for meeting the needs of gifted students. This policy further specifies the Board's expectations regarding **program admission**; **nomination**; parental consent; identification; **selection**, including newly enrolled students; assessment; reassessment; parental notification; learning opportunities; furlough; and, provisions for program exit, reentry, and appeals.

The words highlighted above – program admission, nomination, and selection – imply a sense of elitism in being identified as a GT student and eligible for GT programs and services. This is a misperception that educators across the country, and within Fort Bend ISD, are seeking to dispel. Local Board policies are intended to set expectations for the District and the terminology codified in policies communicates those expectations and shared values to stakeholders.

As a point of reference, *Policy EHBB (LEGAL)* does not include the words “admission” or “nomination,” but it does use the word “selection” two times. The corresponding nomenclature used in the State Plan is “referral” and “identification.” Notably, the Department's *Gifted and Talented Handbook* (last updated July 16, 2018) explicitly states: “Local policy uses the word ‘nominate’ for student program admission. The word ‘referral’ will be used in place of ‘nominate’ within administrative procedures to align with the *Texas State Plan for Gifted and Talented*.”

Recommendation 1: Update Policy EHBB (LOCAL) to align with the nomenclature in the State Plan.

The Fort Bend ISD Trustees should update the nomenclature in *Policy EHBB (LOCAL)* to align to the nomenclature in the State Plan. Administrative procedures and other GT program documentation should be updated accordingly. In addition, the District should also consider changing the nomenclature of the “Campus Selection Committee” to “Campus Identification Committee.” The nuanced change in terminology will help to facilitate an increased awareness and understanding by parents and staff of the unique characteristics and needs of gifted and talented students, and that being identified as GT should not be perceived as a privilege.

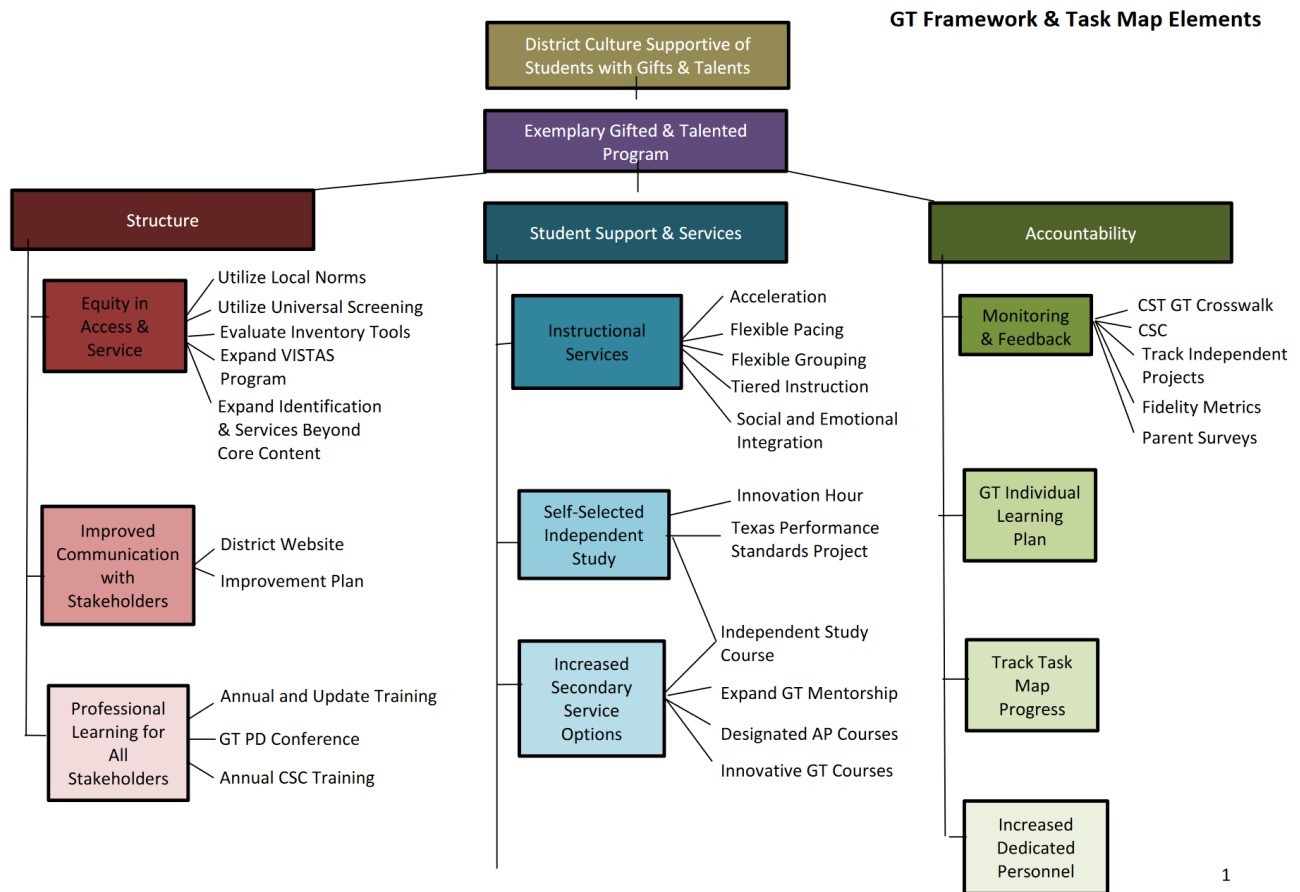
Management Response: *Management agrees with this recommendation. EHBB is up for review and management agrees this nomenclature alignment should be implemented. Management plans for this to be complete by BOY 2022-23.*

Commendation 1: The GT Department, through the work of a GT Task Force, is implementing a Five-Year Task Map to drive GT program improvements in alignment with the State Plan.

Evaluation of Fort Bend ISD's GT program began in 2017-18 with the creation of a GT Task Force, which is comprised of representatives from various stakeholder groups, including District leaders, program staff, campus administrators, GT students, parents, and community members. The Task Force was established to address feedback about the District's GT program that was provided to Board members during listening tours, GT parent meetings, and through surveys.

Using the State Plan as a rubric, the GT Task Force developed an initial list of recommendations for ensuring compliance with the accountability standards provided in the State Plan, as well as recommendations for developing an exemplary GT program beyond the minimum compliance standards. A GT Planning Framework (Figure 2) outlined three broad strategies for implementing each of the recommendations:

- **Structural Improvement to Support the GT Program** – Fort Bend ISD will develop a culture that values and supports appropriate services for GT learners as students with exceptionalities. The culture will be influenced by improving communication regarding GT learners, their needs, and the Fort Bend ISD GT program, as well as by enhancing the structural support of the GT program.
- **GT Program Student Support and Services** – Fort Bend ISD will improve GT services and the array of learning opportunities for GT learners at all levels. Schools will utilize flexible grouping, flexible pacing, appropriate use of materials, and implement acceleration options to ensure gifted learners have access to advanced learning opportunities that meet their needs.
- **Monitoring and Feedback to Provide Accountability within the GT Program** – Fort Bend ISD will ensure appropriate GT services and instruction are implemented consistently districtwide. Tools and systems will be created to provide monitoring and feedback specific to teaching GT learners. This will help teachers of GT learners grow in the application of the skills. Tools and systems will also be created to ensure campuses are implementing service components with fidelity. Fort Bend ISD will provide guidance to teachers and clear communication with parents regarding appropriate GT services for identified students through the development of GT Individual Learning Plans.

Figure 2. Fort Bend ISD GT Framework and Task Map Elements

Source: Fort Bend ISD

In addition to the GT Framework, the GT Task Force developed a Five-Year Task Map (Task Map) to serve as an internal guiding document for accomplishing the Department's short- and long-term initiatives. For each strategy, the Task Map includes criteria by which to measure the success of each initiative and a component checklist the GT Task Force utilized as the task maps were developed. Further, each task identifies the responsible individual, the component of the State Plan to which it is aligned, budget implications, personnel needs, start date, projected finish date, and actual finish date. Figure 3 below presents an excerpt from the Task Map.

Figure 3. Excerpt from GT Five-Year Task Map, January 31, 2022

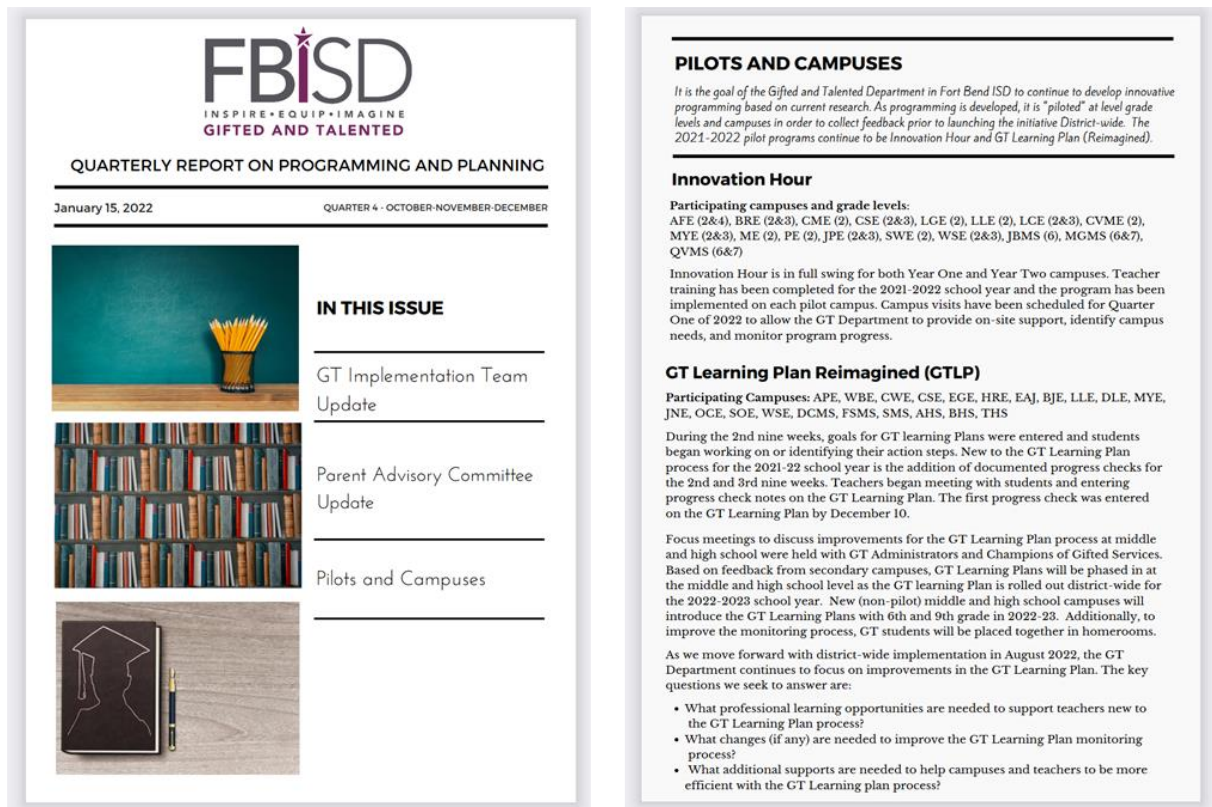
Strategy Title: Monitoring & Feedback to Provide Accountability within the GT Program		Start Date: May 2019	Projected Completion Date: May 2023
<p>Project Summary: FBISD will ensure appropriate GT services and instruction are implemented consistently district-wide. Tools and systems will be created to provide monitoring and feedback specific to teaching GT learners. This will help teachers of GT learners grow in the application of the skills. Tools and systems will also be created to ensure campuses are implementing service components with fidelity. FBISD will provide guidance to teachers and clear communication with parents regarding appropriate GT services for identified students through the development of GT Individual Learning Plans.</p>		<p>Success Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The GT Department has facilitated the integration of GT programming into the Campus Support Team (CST) tool and this tool has been used to provide feedback to stakeholders. - Campus Selection Committees implement identification standards across all campuses, including normed campuses, with fidelity. - Stakeholders have implemented GT Learning Plans with fidelity. - The GT Department has designed and implemented an effective system to track student-selected independent projects. - The GT Department has reviewed the Five-Year Task Maps using established feedback protocol for any amendments, edits, and/or adjustments. - The GT Department has utilized a staffing protocol annually. 	
<p>Component Checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> _____ Tasks are included that improve equity and access for under-represented students. _____ Budget needs are explained. _____ Additional personnel needs are addressed. _____ Tasks include plans to communicate with all stakeholders. _____ Any policy change needs are included. 			

Ref No	Monitoring and Feedback: CST GT Crosswalk	State Plan Component	Start Date	Projected Finish	Actual Finish	
3N	Collaborate with Teaching and Learning and the Department of School Leadership to develop a CST GT Crosswalk tool. (SD-A17.1), (PD-A11.1)	PD, CI	Aug 2021	Feb 2022	On track	
3R	Pilot use of the CST GT Crosswalk tool for campus administrators to provide GT teachers feedback. (SD-A17.1), (PD-A11.1, 1.2)	PD, CI	Aug 2022	May 2023		
1AB	Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for administrators and teachers regarding best practices to utilize the CST/GT Crosswalk tool based on feedback from pilot implementation (SD-A17.3), (PD-A11.3)	PD	June 2022	July 2022		
3S	Collaborate with Teaching and Learning Division and Department of School Leadership to incorporate Gifted/Talented-specific Campus Support Team walks utilizing the CST/GT Crosswalk tool. (SD-A112.2)	PD, CI	Aug 2022	May 2023		
GT Representation		State Plan Component	Start Date	Projected Finish	Actual Finish	
	Create a GT Representation Work Stream to examine the disproportionality in FBISD, the Vistas Program, and the parent communication on Title I campuses.	SA	Nov 2021	Nov 2021	Complete Nov 2021	New
	Conduct Root Cause Analysis (RCA) for GT Representation in FBISD.	SA	Nov 2021	May 2022	On Track	New

Source: Fort Bend ISD

The Task Map is updated quarterly as tasks are completed or revised to reflect the most current timeline(s) and research findings. Indicators of progress and implementation status are presented to the Superintendent quarterly and to the Board annually. Commendably, the GT Department also reports the status of all completed, ongoing, and long-term initiatives on the District's website at <https://www.fortbendisd.com/Page/131444>. Below is an excerpt from the most recent quarterly update.

Figure 4. Excerpt from GT Quarterly Report – January 15, 2022



Source: Fort Bend ISD

Through the work of the GT Implementation Team and the ambitious initiatives outlined in the Task Map, the GT Department has established a clear path for improving the GT program design and structure, supports and services, and oversight and accountability to better meet the needs of GT students in Fort Bend ISD.

Finding 2: The GT Department is not staffed at a level needed to accomplish the goals set forth in the Five-Year Task Map.

Over the past five years, Fort Bend ISD increased GT program staffing in the central office in an effort to provide better management and oversight of GT program resources, and to better support campuses in the implementation of GT services. In 2017-18, the GT program included three FTE Coordinator positions (each overseeing the GTA, elementary, and secondary programs), one FTE GT Mentorship Teacher, and an Executive Assistant. In 2018-19, a separate GT Department was established as the result of recommendations put forth by the GT Task Force, and the current Director was hired to oversee the GT program. At this same time, the GT Department was organizationally realigned from Transformation Teaching to Teaching and Learning. In December of 2019, the Department was again realigned from Teaching and Learning to Student Support Services. This realignment seems appropriate as it reinforces the core belief that students identified for GT services require differentiated curriculum in an appropriate program to meet their unique needs and to reach their full potential. From 2017-18 to 2020-21, several positions were vacated and/or reclassified, and by 2020-21, Department staffing included a net increase of two FTE (for a total of seven FTE).

While the Department experienced some growth in the number of positions over the past few years, consensus feedback from District leadership, program management, and other stakeholders is that current staffing levels are still not sufficient to accomplish with fidelity all of the initiatives set forth in the Task Map. Some of the priority initiatives include expanding and supporting the Vistas program; supporting teachers implementing instructional practices such as flexible grouping and pacing; developing and designing the curriculum for innovative GT courses; supporting campuses in the expansion of pilot programs such as Innovation Hour, TPSP, and Gifted Individual Learning Plans; expanding the GT Mentorship Program; and, expanding the GT program and services beyond the four core content areas. (These initiatives are described further in *Chapter 4 – Program Design and Delivery*.) Accomplishing these initiatives and supporting campuses in implementing program components with fidelity will require increased District-level and program-focused oversight, accountability, and communication.

To provide some context for Fort Bend ISD, the audit team reviewed the staffing levels and service delivery models of the six comparator district GT programs (Table 10). Because the information provided below is assembled from publicly available information from district websites, this assessment is limited in that the specific roles and responsibilities of each position cannot be determined, nor can the operating efficiency and effectiveness of each district's GT program. Further, whether or not each district is in compliance with the State Plan is also unknown, so it is unclear whether or not each district is optimally staffed given its own initiatives. The three primary observations from the benchmarking assessment are:

- Program service delivery models, which can be drivers of central office staffing, vary across districts. More detail regarding each district's GT programs and services is presented in *Chapter 4 – Program Design and Implementation*.
- Central office staffing levels and position titles vary widely across the comparator districts. Conroe ISD and Katy ISD appear to be staffed at the same level as Fort Bend ISD, while the other comparator districts appear to have few central office positions that support the GT program.
- Four of the six districts have GT programs organized within a Department of Advanced Academics, which includes other programs such as International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Via Individual Determination (AVID).

Table 10. Comparator Districts GT Program Staffing, 2021

District	GT Students	GT Positions
Conroe ISD	5,300	The Gifted and Talented Department includes seven positions: a GT Specialist, an Administrative Assistant, a District Instructional Coach, and four GT Challenge Pull-Out Teachers. GT programming is supported at the campus-level by a GT Facilitator, a role that is assigned to either an Assistant Principal or Counselor.
Humble ISD	3,500	The GT program is organized within a Department of Advanced Learning and Programs and is led by a GT Coordinator who reports to a Director of Advanced Learning and Services. Other staff within the Department include an AVID/IB Coordinator.
Katy ISD	7,000	The Office of GT and Advanced Academics is led by a Director of GT and Advanced Academics, an Assistant to the Director, an Instructional Officer

District	GT Students	GT Positions
		of GT and Advanced Academics, a Lead GT Facilitator, a GT Finance Clerk, and a GT Testing Lead.
Klein ISD	3,000	The Advanced Academic Services Department is led by a Director, an Assistant Director, and four Program Coordinators. Programs overseen by this Department include Gifted and Talented, Klein Prep, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program, AVID, Dual Credit, and various out-of-school options.
North East ISD	4,600	The Gifted and Talented Department is comprised of an Assistant Director of GT, a GT Instructional Specialist, and a Testing Clerk.
Spring Branch ISD	3,600	The Advanced Academic Studies Department includes a Director, two GT Facilitators, and an Administrative Assistant.

Source: District websites and program information

Recommendation 2: Increase GT Department staff to support the priority initiatives in the Task Map that are focused on meeting the State Plan requirements.

One of the ongoing tasks identified in the Task Map is to develop a staffing protocol (campus- and district-based) that will be used to request staffing needed for upcoming GT initiatives. At this point in time, any increases in program resources should be in support of initiatives that ensure compliance with the State Plan over those that may be focused on meeting exemplary standards. Based on the results of this audit, it is recommended that Fort Bend ISD add one FTE Specialist position who would be responsible for supporting the consistent and equitable implementation of GT services and resources across the District's 79 campuses. This itinerant position should report to either the Elementary and Secondary Program Managers, and would directly support GT teachers in implementing with fidelity instructional programs and practices, such as the Vistas program, flexible pacing, and providing differentiated support for students identified as GT. Implementation of an integrated GT student data management system (see Recommendation 6 below) will help current staff realize additional efficiencies in their day-to-day operations, freeing up additional time to dedicate to planned initiatives.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need for additional staff to support priority initiatives and acknowledges that implementation would require additional funding/resources. It will be up to District leadership to determine if resources can/should be reallocated based on the District's priorities.*

Finding 3: The GT Department is coding some non-allowable expenditures for Pre-AP teachers to Program Intent Code (PIC) 21.

Texas Code §29.122(b) requires that each school district adopt a policy regarding the use of funds to support the district's program for gifted and talented students. PIC 21 is used to report the use of funds on the LEA's program for gifted and talented as provided by State Board of Education rule. Accordingly, PIC 21 should be used to report the costs incurred to assess students for program placement and provide instructional services (which are guided by the State Plan) beyond the basic educational program and that are designed to meet the needs of students in gifted and talented programs. PIC 21 allowable costs include those relating to:

- Gifted and talented programs; and,
- Advanced placement courses designated as part of a gifted and talented program.

Non-allowable PIC 21 costs include those relating to:

- Honors and college preparatory courses (PIC 11);
- Advanced placement courses not designated as part of a gifted and talented program (PIC 21);
- Summer camps, summer schools, field trips, or other summer enrichment programs (PIC 11); and,
- All DAEP-related costs.

In Fort Bend ISD, identified students in Grades 6-12 are provided services through open enrollment Advanced Academic Class (AAC) and AP classes with GT-trained teachers in the core subject areas of English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. Open enrollment AAC and AP classes are available to all students, not just GT students, and therefore are not allowable expenditures for PIC 21.⁶ This does not apply to most of the AAC teachers at the Gifted and Talented Academy at QVMS because this program is designated specifically for the GT Program. Of note, QVMS also provides GT services to students who are not enrolled in the GT Academy, so the coding of these teachers to PIC 21 is inappropriate. As mentioned previously, Fort Bend ISD stopped reporting expenditures for high school AAC and AP teachers to PIC 21 in 2018-19; however, it continues to report expenditures for middle school AAC teachers to PIC 21. Table 11 below shows the number of teachers coded to PIC 21 in 2020-21 at each of the District's 15 middle schools.

Table 11. Teachers Coded to PIC 21 by Campus, 2020-21

Middle School	Total GT Students	PIC 21 Teacher FTE
41 DULLES MIDDLE SCHOOL	41	12.1
42 MISSOURI CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL	8	4.2
43 SUGAR LAND MIDDLE SCHOOL	30	9.2
44 QUAIL VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL *	542	24.3
45 FIRST COLONY MIDDLE SCHOOL	108	6.1
46 CHRISTA MCAULIFE MIDDLE SCHOOL	6	2.4
47 HODGES BEND MIDDLE SCHOOL	22	5.7
48 LAKE OLYMPIA MIDDLE SCHOOL	5	0
49 MACARIO GARCIA MIDDLE SCHOOL	55	10.5

⁶ Confirmation from TEA School Finance Department (email response to Gibson on September 27, 2021: "Teacher salaries for open enrollment Pre-AP and AP courses are not allowable for PIC 21. The costs incurred must be part of the GT program and these are costs incurred for AP courses in general and not specifically for the GT program."

Middle School	Total GT Students	PIC 21 Teacher FTE
50 SARTARTIA MIDDLE SCHOOL	229	15.0
51 FORT SETTLEMENT MIDDLE SCHOOL	316	19.7
52 BILLY BAINES MIDDLE SCHOOL	60	13.2
53 DAVID CROCKETT MIDDLE SCHOOL	13	7.8
54 JAMES BOWIE MIDDLE SCHOOL	56	0
55 RONALD THORNTON MIDDLE SCHOOL	92	0
Total PIC 21 Teachers	1,583	130.3

Source: Fort Bend ISD Position Data

*QVMS teacher FTE represents all GT-trained teachers at the campus coded to PIC 21, not just those that are part of the GT Academy.

Recommendation 3: Ensure only allowable expenditures are reported to PIC 21.

Fort Bend ISD should discontinue reporting non-allowable Pre-AP teacher expenditures to PIC 21. The current version of the Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG) should be used for reference regarding allowable expenditures.

Management Response: *Management agrees with this recommendation. Management will work with the Budget and Finance Department to assure only allowable expenditures are reported to PIC 21 for EOY 2022-23.*

Finding 4: Fort Bend ISD is not in compliance with the State Plan accountability standard that requires the Board of Trustees to be trained on GT program accountability.

The Board of Trustees has primary responsibility for ensuring that the District complies with all applicable requirements of state educational programs (TEC §7.028), and accountability standard 5.10 in the State Plan states that “Local district boards of trustees are trained to ensure program accountability based on the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students.” Providing training to Fort Bend ISD’s Trustees is included on the Department’s Task Map with a planned implementation date of June 2021. As of October 2021, this task has not yet been completed, putting the District out of compliance with the State’s accountability standard.

The Fort Bend ISD GT Program management reports that it has not yet provided the required training due to recent and high turnover among the Trustees and District leadership – five of the Trustees have been newly-elected since 2020, and a new Superintendent officially started on October 6, 2021. Management reports that it intends to provide the required Board training in Spring 2022.

Recommendation 4: Provide training to the Board of Trustees as required by the State Plan.

Program accountability training for the Fort Bend ISD Trustees should be provided annually by the GT Department or by the Region 4 Education Service Center (ESC). This training is required by the State to ensure that Board members are familiar with the State Plan accountability standards and that GT programs and services meet these compliance standards.

In addition to ensuring that the Trustees receive the required GT training as soon as feasible, the Department should also strive to support Trustees in meeting the State's exemplary standard (5.10.1), which states that "local district boards of trustees are encouraged to pursue professional development on the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students." This will support the Department's goal of moving the GT program from one that is simply compliant with the State standards to one that is exemplary.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to provide training to the FBISD Board of Trustees. This training is under development (based on the need for quality asynchronous options with COVID) and will be available by BOY 2022-23.*

Finding 5: Many campuses do not address the provision of programs and services for GT students in their Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) as required by the State Plan.

The State Plan accountability standard 4.8 requires that "provisions to improve services to GT students are included in district and campus improvement plans," and accountability standard 6.8 requires that "the effectiveness of GT services is evaluated annually, shared with the board of trustees, and the data is used to modify and update district and campus improvement plans. Parents are included in the evaluation process, and the outcomes and findings of the evaluation are shared with parents."

The Fort Bend ISD District Improvement Plan (DIP) includes several strategies for improving the provision of programs and services to GT students. These strategies are addressed within Goal 1 (Performance Objective 5) and Goal 3 (Performance Objective 1) of the DIP as follows:

Goal 1 – Fort Bend ISD will provide an equitable learning environment that provides all students access to the FBISD curriculum.

- **Performance Objective 5** – By June 2021, each school in Fort Bend ISD will demonstrate progress toward achieving equitable access to a safe, challenging, and engaging learning environment as demonstrated on the expected results measures reflected in district, State, and federal/national data reports.
 - **Strategy 4** – Support campuses in the recruitment of students for AVID, CTE, Advanced Academic Courses (previously Pre-AP), AP, and Dual Credit courses.
 - **Strategy 5** – *Implement Local Norms and track proportionality by campus (GT). *Integrate Vistas supports in Grades 1-5 curriculum to support talent pool goals.

Goal 3 – Fort Bend ISD will provide an inclusive, collaborative, and fluid learning environment with opportunities for both risk-taking and success at every school.

- **Performance Objective 1** – By June 2021, each school in Fort Bend ISD will facilitate student choice through diverse programming and differentiated student learning experiences as demonstrated through the Evaluation Metrics and Milestones.

Evaluation Data Sources: 1) Examine any changes in proportionality of student groups tested and identified for GT Services over the last two years (2019-20 and 2020-21); 2) Increase District compliance with the State GT plan in at least five of the nine out-of-compliance standards.

- **Strategy 4** – Compare changes in disaggregated 2019-20 GT identification numbers by campus and populations with disaggregated 2020-21 GT identification numbers by campus and populations.

- **Strategy 5** – *Develop GT resources evaluation tool.

* Develop and implement system for annual evaluation (and modification) of GT curriculum.

* Develop and implement Curricular Alternatives in Grades 1-5 curriculum.

* Develop and implement ELL (Vistas) curricular supports.

* Develop, plan, and provide GT training for the Board of Trustees.

However, a review of a sample of elementary school CIPs found that many campuses do not address the provision of programs and services for GT students, putting the District out of compliance with the State Plan on this standard. The audit team reviewed the CIPs of the 10 elementary schools with the lowest percentage of GT enrollment (i.e., less than 1.5%). Of these, eight did not include any references to GT students (Table 12). When GT is omitted from CIPs, it is unlikely that school-level strategies, actions, and resources will be aligned to support the unique needs of the GT student population.

Table 12. Inclusion of GT in Sample of Elementary School CIPs, 2021-22

Elementary School	Pct. GT	CIP Reference
108-Blue Ridge ES	0.4%	"Provide training for teachers to identify GT students"
139-Goodman ES	0.6%	"There is a lack of teacher awareness and knowledge. There hasn't been a focus on gifted programs campus wide. We focus more on closing gaps for students. We need to focus on enrichment. We focus more on Tier 3 than Tier 1. We also need professional development to increase rigor for GT students. Teachers use GT students as peer support instead of providing enriching experiences. Teachers need to learn more about the profile of the GT students and the gaps they can have."
122-Hunters Glen ES	0.8%	None
113-Briargate ES	0.8%	None

Elementary School	Pct. GT	CIP Reference
144-Armstrong ES	0.9%	None
150 Heritage Rose ES	1.0%	None
116-Ridgeway ES	1.1%	None
124-Mission Glen ES	1.3%	None
112-Dulles ES	1.4%	None
114-Townwest ES	1.4%	None

Source: Fort Bend ISD Campus Improvement Plans, 2021-22

Recommendation 5: Improve accountability for GT student achievement and growth by ensuring that the provision of programs and services for GT students is adequately addressed in all CIPs, as required by the State Plan.

Pursuant to Board Policy BQ (LEGAL) and (LOCAL), each campus is responsible for annually developing a Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) for the purpose of improving student performance for all student populations, including students in special education programs. The campus improvement planning process is led by the principal with the assistance of a Campus Based Leadership Team (CBLT). It is intended to be a year-long cycle that includes the collection and analysis of data for development of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), which is the means by which campuses identify their educational strengths and areas in need of improvement. The CNA guides the development of the CIP and provides benchmarks for its formative and summative evaluation. Most CIPs, however, tend to focus on those students farthest away from demonstrating proficiency on the State's academic content and achievement standards. Beyond meeting the compliance requirements set forth in the State Plan, Fort Bend ISD must ensure that programs and services for GT students are meaningfully incorporated into all CIPs as part of the established campus improvement planning process. The GT Department, in collaboration with the School Leadership Department and principal supervisors, should set expectations for inclusion of GT into CIPs, provide exemplars, and then monitor and hold principals accountable. Importantly, the GT Department should be a standing agenda item at principal PLC meetings (in the same way as other departments) in order to communicate about program initiatives and expectations.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to improve accountability for GT achievement growth and that GT is represented appropriately in the Campus Improvement Planning process. Management will provide the appropriate training and support to campus leaders to assure GT is reflected in all Campus Improvement Planning for BOY 2022-23.*

Finding 6: The process for centrally monitoring compliance with the GT training requirements established in Board Policy DMA (LEGAL) is cumbersome and error-prone due to disparate applications for managing data.

Policy DMA (LEGAL) specifies the training requirements for teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the GT program and for administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions. This policy requires that:

- Before assignment to the program for gifted students, teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of the program have a minimum of 30 hours of staff development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students, assessment of student needs, and curriculum and instruction for gifted students.
- Teachers without the required training who provide instruction and services that are part of the gifted/talented program complete the 30-hour training requirement within one semester.
- Teachers who provide instruction and services that are part of a program for gifted students receive a minimum of six hours annually of professional development in gifted education.
- Administrators and counselors who have authority for program decisions have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of gifted/talented students and program options.

In Fort Bend ISD, GT Administrators on each campus are responsible for ensuring that teachers who provide instruction and services to GT students meet the training requirements established in *Policy DMA (LEGAL)*. The GT Department provides a second level of accountability by conducting periodic checks of campus reports.

Teachers instructing students identified for GT services are required to take 30-hours foundation training (one-time) and six-hours update training annually. The in-district 30-hour foundation training was offered by Fort Bend ISD during the summer for a week and in a 10-week blended model during the fall semester. In addition, teachers could attend the Houston COOP sessions on Saturday. An online option delivered as a series of five on-demand learning modules offered by the Texas Association for the Gifted and Talented (TAGT) was available for late hires or for those who had scheduling conflicts. Teachers who earn their GT credentials from other school districts, co-ops, and/or regional service centers are required to submit a hard copy of their training certificate(s) for approval by the GT Department.

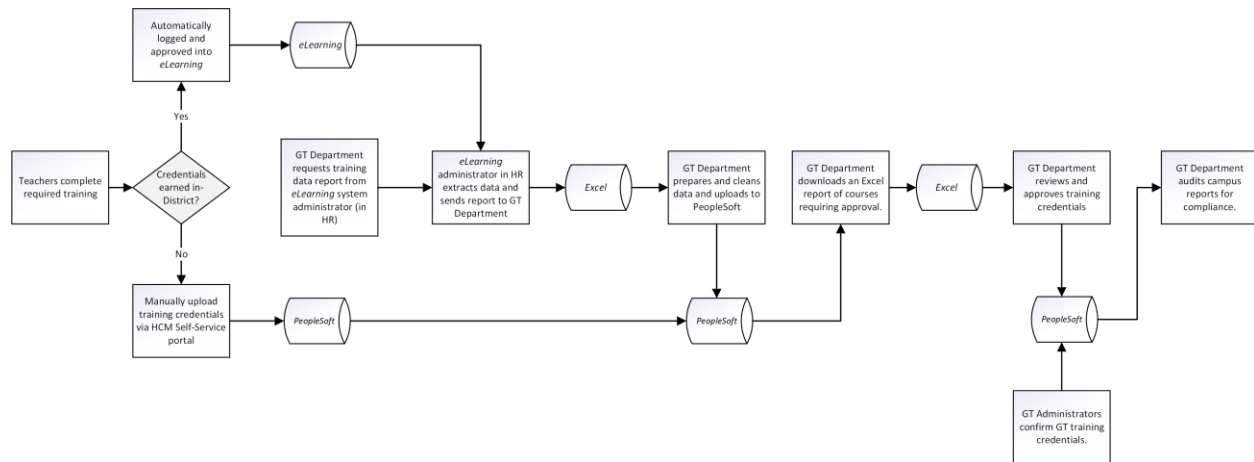
Teachers may complete the six-hour update training through a variety of approved professional learning opportunities. Prior to 2019-20, teachers were allowed to complete their six-hour update training through any method (in- or out-of-district). Beginning in 2019-20, teachers are required to complete all of their six-hour update training in-district. This change was made in an effort to better align teacher training with Department initiatives and standards.

All GT teacher training credentials are stored and maintained in *GT Credentialing*, a custom in-house developed application within the *PeopleSoft* enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. Throughout the year, credentials earned from in-district professional development are entered by the GT Department into *PeopleSoft* through an upload from *eLearning*, the District's professional learning system. Teachers also upload training certificates to *PeopleSoft* through a self-service portal for all training that occurs outside of Fort Bend ISD, as described previously.

The process for reviewing and approving training credentials, as well as uploading training hours from *eLearning* to *PeopleSoft*, is described by the GT Department management as cumbersome, time-consuming, and error-prone, and poses a compliance risk to the District. The two primary applications involved in this process – *PeopleSoft* and *eLearning* – do not integrate, which means that a manual process

is required to download data from *eLearning*, clean and manipulate the data in *Excel* into an acceptable format, and then upload the data into *PeopleSoft*. Training credentials are reviewed and approved in *PeopleSoft*, but system limitations make it difficult to distinguish between credentials that were previously unapproved and credentials that are waiting to be approved. Part of the challenge is due to the fact that the extracts from *eLearning* do not contain all of the data elements required for *PeopleSoft*, nor do they present data in the required file layout. The GT Department reports that the process of manually cleaning and manipulating the data in *Excel*, and reviewing and approving credentials in *PeopleSoft*, takes approximately six weeks and is inherently error-prone. The step-by-step process and the tools used are illustrated in Figure 5 and annotated in detail below.

Figure 5. Monitoring and Tracking GT Professional Development Requirements



Source: Gibson Consulting Group

- Teachers complete the initial 30-hours foundation training and/or the six-hour annual update training.
 - Training credentials earned in-district are automatically logged and approved in *eLearning*.
 - Training credentials earned out-of-district are uploaded by teachers into *PeopleSoft* via the Human Capital Management (HCM) self-service portal.
- The GT Department updates *PeopleSoft* with teacher training credentials from *eLearning*.
 - The GT Department submits a request to the *eLearning* Systems Administrator in the Human Resources Department for an extract of GT teacher training hours from *eLearning*. (Note the GT Department cannot directly query *eLearning*.)
 - The *eLearning* Systems Administrator extracts an *Excel* report from *eLearning* and sends the file to the GT Department.
 - The GT Department manually manipulates the *Excel* file so that data are in a format and file layout that can be uploaded to *PeopleSoft*. This requires adding the TAGT strand for each course; adding a column to the spreadsheet and indicating for each course if it was foundation

(F) or update (U); adding the employee ID to indicate that the course is approved; adding the report pull-date; adding a column to indicate the course location (FBD); and, adding an indicator (Y) to confirm that the course was completed.

- The GT Department uploads the reformatted *Excel* file to *PeopleSoft*.
- The GT Department reviews and approves training credentials in *PeopleSoft*.
 - The GT Department queries *PeopleSoft* and generates an “Approval Needed” report, which is downloaded in *Excel*. This report contains all courses that need to be reviewed and approved (or not). A limitation of the current configuration of the *GT Credentialing* software is that a null value in the “approved” column represents courses that are not yet approved *and* courses that were previously unapproved.
 - The GT Department individually reviews and approves (or not) each GT course for all employees in *PeopleSoft*.
- GT Administrators confirm that teachers of GT students on their campus meet the GT training requirements.
 - GT Administrators generate a campus report from *PeopleSoft* and review the GT training records for all teachers of GT students on their campus.
- The GT Department conducts periodic checks of campus reports to ensure compliance with *Policy DMA (LEGAL)*.

Teachers without required training who are assigned to provide instruction and services to identified GT students must complete the 30-hour training within one semester. Annually, teachers must complete the required 6-hour training no later than Friday before Spring Break each year. Frequent monitoring of teacher training credentials is necessary to ensure continued compliance with *Policy DMA (LEGAL)*. However, because of the level of effort and inordinate amount of time it takes the GT Department to extract, process, upload, review, and approve GT teacher training credentials, this process only occurs once or twice per year, typically right before the start of school when many teachers are still working to complete their required training.

To assess the magnitude of this compliance issue, the audit team conducted a test to determine if a sample population of GT students are being taught by a GT-trained teacher. The audit team judgmentally selected 40 GT students (representing less than one percent of the total GT student population) from the District’s October 2021 Snapshot enrollment file. Table 13 provides a profile of the test population of GT students.

Table 13. Profile of the Audit Test Population of GT Students

School Level		Grade		Ethnicity		Eco-Dis Status		Identified Area(s) of Giftedness	
Elementary Middle High	15 9 16	GR 3	5	Asian Black/AA Hispanic Two or More White	15 6 11 1 7	No Yes	29 11	All Areas	11
		GR 4	7					Math/Science	11
		GR 5	3					ELA/Social Studies	2
		GR 6	4					Math Only	1
		GR 7	3					Not Provided	13
		GR 8	2					Not GT Student	2
		GR 9	5						
		GR 10	6						
		GR 11	3						
		GR 12	2						

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data

The audit team provided the list of student IDs to the GT Department, who in turn provided the audit team with the 2020-21 course schedule data for each student. The audit team then cross-walked all of the teacher IDs included in the student's course schedules to the GT training records (extracted from *PeopleSoft*) for all of the District's teachers, counselors, and administrators. The objective of the audit test was to determine whether or not students in the sample population were enrolled in a course with *at least one* GT-trained teacher. This test did not seek to determine if GT students were being taught by a GT-trained teacher in their area(s) of identified giftedness, however.

Of the 40 GT students included in the test population:

- Management indicated that two of the students are not currently identified as GT students. This is inconsistent with the 2021 October Snapshot enrollment file, which is an extract from *Skyward*, the District's student information system.
- Management was unable to provide the specified area(s) of giftedness for 13 students. These students are in Grade 3 (two), Grade 4 (five), Grade 5 (two), Grade 6 (one), Grade 8 (one), Grade 9 (one), and Grade 10 (one).
- Thirty-eight students were enrolled in at least one course with a GT-trained teacher; two students did not have any GT-trained teachers in their course schedule. (These are not the same two students that Management indicated are not identified as GT.)

The results of this audit test yielded two key observations: 1) five percent of students in the test population did not meet the compliance standard of being taught by a GT-trained teacher; this non-compliance rate may be actually higher if the audit test sought to determine if students are being taught by a GT-trained teacher in their identified area(s) of giftedness; and 2) 37.5 percent of students in the test population have incomplete (i.e., missing areas of giftedness) or incorrect (i.e., not identified as GT) student records. This latter finding is related to the management of GT student data, and is discussed further in *Chapter 3 – Student Referral, Assessment, and Identification*.

Recommendation 6: Streamline GT administrative processes through the implementation of an integrated program management software application.

Management and oversight of the GT program in Fort Bend ISD could significantly be improved – both from an efficiency and effectiveness perspective – with the use of an integrated software application to manage all aspects of GT programming, including the identification process, progress monitoring, compliance and other reporting, and parent communications. Several compliance risks have been documented in this audit, and an integrated program management system would mitigate some of those identified risks.

Fort Bend ISD is currently in the process of developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified firms for a comprehensive and web-based application and management system for special education, 504, and related services. The new software would replace the District's current software, *Frontline (SuccessEd)*. Many software companies, including *Frontline*, offer a suite of program management software solutions for special populations, including Gifted and Talented. The Department, under the leadership of the Executive Director, should leverage this effort and include the functional requirements for a GT program management software in the RFP, with the goal of implementing a new solution for managing all aspects of GT programming.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need for an integrated program management software application and acknowledges that implementation would require additional funding/resources. It will be up to District leadership to determine if resources can/should be reallocated based on the District's priorities.*

Finding 7: Vehicles for disseminating GT program information from the central office to campuses are perceived as ineffective.

Reliance on COGS as the primary vehicle for disseminating information about the GT program and initiatives to GT Administrators and principals has been ineffective. The primary role of the COGS is to serve as a liaison between the GT Department and the campus. This includes facilitating trainings to ensure consistent implementation of the GT program on their campus; communicating the District's expectations with campus administration and teachers; and, informing the school community about campus and District gifted opportunities. As mentioned previously, COGS are full-time teachers who receive a stipend for these additional responsibilities.

The GT Department convenes COGS monthly to share information about specific GT program initiatives, and COGS are expected to bring that information back to their campuses. Feedback from COGS provided to the audit team during a group interview suggest that the content and format of the monthly meetings need refinement – "*they are not well-structured, they lack focus, and are not conducive to dialogue (i.e., Q&A) due to the large group size.*" The COGS further stated that they wanted more specific guidance from the Department regarding their roles and responsibilities (e.g., "*I want to better understand what I'm supposed to do and why*").

The audit team also solicited feedback during group interviews with GT Administrators (a role typically assumed by an assistant principal), and elementary and secondary principals regarding their levels of satisfaction with the quality and frequency of communications they receive from the GT Department, and whether or not their informational needs about the GT program are being met. The plurality of participants

in all of the group interviews were unaware of the GT Task Force (now GT Implementation Team) or familiar with the GT Five-Year Task Map. This is notable, as these positions are heavily relied upon by the Department to ensure that the GT programs and services are implemented with fidelity across the District's 80 campuses.

GT Administrators rely on the COGS to relay information to them from the central office about the GT program. However, there appears to be some inconsistency across campuses in terms of the timeliness and thoroughness with which COGS have shared information with them. Several GT Administrators suggested reverting to a prior practice of participating in joint monthly meetings with COGS and the GT Department (*"if this is a District priority, then I need to hear first-hand what the expectations are"*). In addition to improving communications, GT Administrators also indicated that they could benefit from additional training. GT Administrators are required to have a minimum of six hours of professional development that includes nature and needs of GT students and program options. This training is only required one time, and many GT Administrators that participated in group interviews indicated that their initial training was several years (or more) ago. As members of the Campus Selection Committee (CSC), GT Administrators are also required by the District to participate annually in a three-hour session to review the District's guidelines for the identification of services and roles of committee members, as well as the process to review data, participate in mock committee meetings, and review the characteristics of gifted children.

The elementary and secondary principals that participated in group interviews (many of whom were not designated as the GT Administrator for their campus) also expressed a need for more communications about the GT program from the central office. Many principals commented that improved communications from the Department would help them better understand and support the Department's initiatives, as well as balance the Department's priorities with other District initiatives. Principals did commend the Department for sharing some information during a recent Principal PLC meeting. In addition to improving communications, all of the principals expressed a desire for formalized training (*"I need to be able to speak to what I see in the classroom"*), yet also noted the difficulty in finding enough time for needed training. Principals also identified a need to see examples of exemplary practices that demonstrate high expectations and effective implementation of the GT program and services.

Recommendation 7: Support campus administrators in program implementation with improved communications and targeted training.

Implementing GT programs and services with fidelity requires that the GT Department provide adequate training and supports to campus administrators. To address the identified communication and training needs of campus administrators, the Department should:

- Split the monthly Department meeting with the COGS into two groups (elementary and secondary) and include the GT Administrators in those monthly meetings. Because the monthly meetings are the primary format for scaffolding information from the central office to campus administrators, it is important that information is shared efficiently and effectively. Provide documentation of meeting minutes and other materials to ensure consistency and clarity of all information shared during these meetings.
- Provide customized and targeted training to all elementary and secondary principals related to ongoing GT initiatives identified in the Task Plan, especially in the identification process and

expectations for finding underrepresented groups, in the use of acceleration and classroom-based strategies that should be visible in GT classrooms (or cluster groups), and parent communications. Leveraging principal PLC meetings to share information is a good practice and should continue.

- Increase ongoing professional development opportunities for all administrators and educators through the development of role-specific training modules.

Management Response: *Management agrees with this recommendation. Management will revisit the customized training provided to campus administrators and enhance the communication and support systems surrounding the GT program.*

Chapter 3 – Student Identification

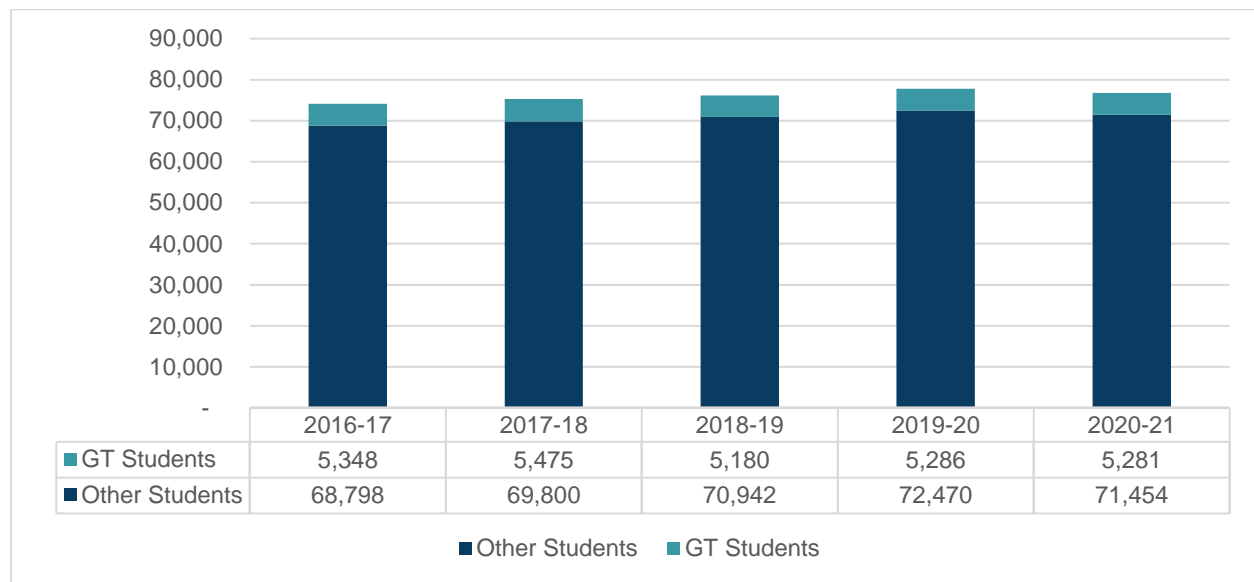
This Chapter provides an overview of Fort Bend ISD's Gifted and Talented (GT) student population, and assesses the District's procedures for referring, assessing, and identifying students in need of GT programs and services. An important part of this analysis was to determine how effective Fort Bend ISD is at seeking out those students with superior aptitudes, including those students for whom accurate identification may be affected because they are economically disadvantaged, have LEP, or have a disability. The key themes that emerge from this Chapter are summarized below.

- Analysis of student demographics and representation of GT students across campuses finds that minority and economically disadvantaged students are underrepresented in the GT student population, and that campus-based referral and identification practices may be contributing factors.
- The Department is commended for implementing several initiatives aimed at improving equity and access to the GT program, including universal screening, using local norms for assessments, specific programming at Title I campuses, and having a centralized process for monitoring student referrals.
- The District's early GT referral timeline, combined with relatively few staff referrals, point to a need to build staff capacity, awareness, and advocacy for GT students.

Fort Bend ISD GT Student Profile

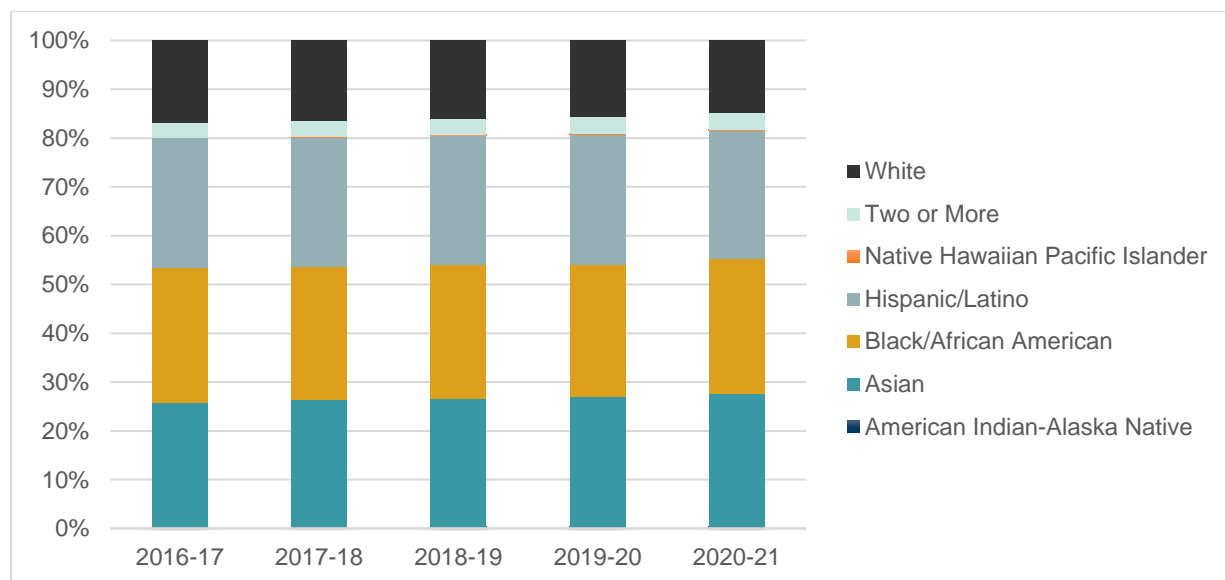
In 2020-21, Fort Bend ISD enrolled 76,735 students in Grades Pre-K through 12 in 52 elementary schools, 15 middle schools, 12 high schools, and one alternative school. Over the past five years, Fort Bend ISD's total student enrollment increased 3.5 percent (2,589 students). In 2020-21, the GT student population accounted for 6.9 percent of all students in the District, which represents a 0.3 percentage point decrease from 2016-17. This is 1.2 percentage points below the statewide average of 8.1 percent.⁷

⁷ TEA 2020 Snapshot report <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/snapshot/2020/state.html>.

Figure 6. Fort Bend ISD Enrollment, 2016-17 to 2020-21

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

Fort Bend ISD has a diverse student population, with Black/African American, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino students representing more than 80 percent of the total student population (Figure 7). Over the past five years, student representation by race/ethnicity has remained fairly constant, with a small increase in the percentage of Asian students (1.8%) and a small decrease in the percentage of White students (-2.2%)

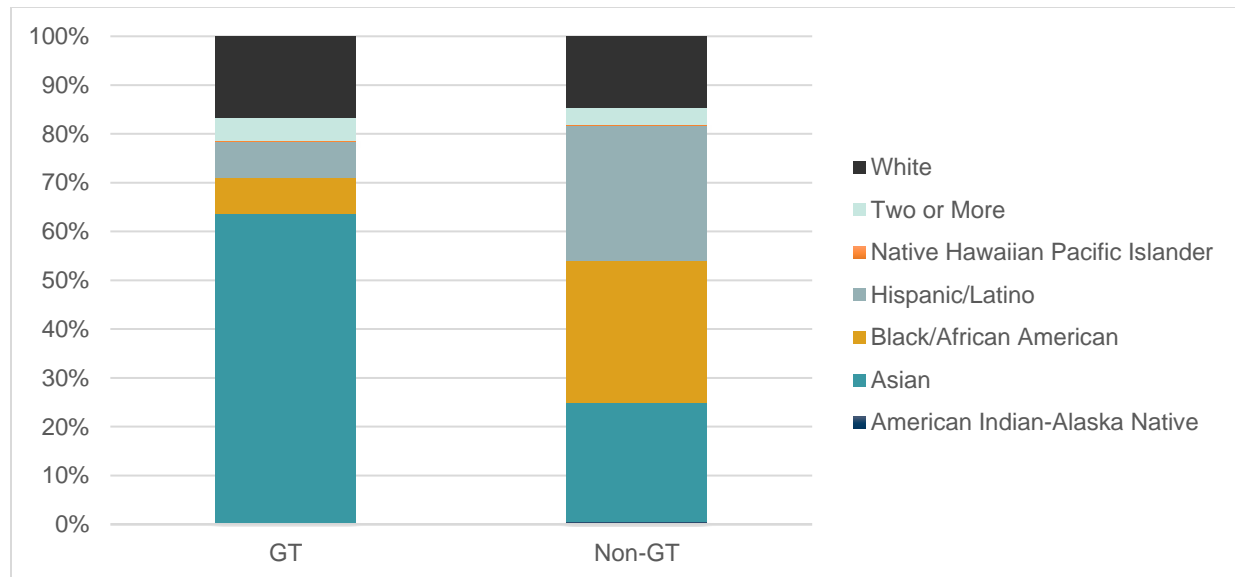
Figure 7. Fort Bend ISD Student Representation by Race/Ethnicity, 2016-17 to 2020-21

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

The State Plan accountability standard (2.25) requires “the population of the gifted/talented services program [to be] closely reflective of the population of the total district and/or campus.” The race/ethnicity of the GT student population in Fort Bend ISD does not reflect the non-GT student population, as shown in

Figure 8. Asian students represent 63.3 percent of the GT student population, compared to 24.6 percent of the non-GT student population. On the contrary, Black/African American students represent 7.5 percent of the GT student population, compared to 29 percent of the non-GT student population. Likewise, Hispanic/Latino students represent 7.4 percent of the GT student population, compared to 27.8 percent of the non-GT student population.

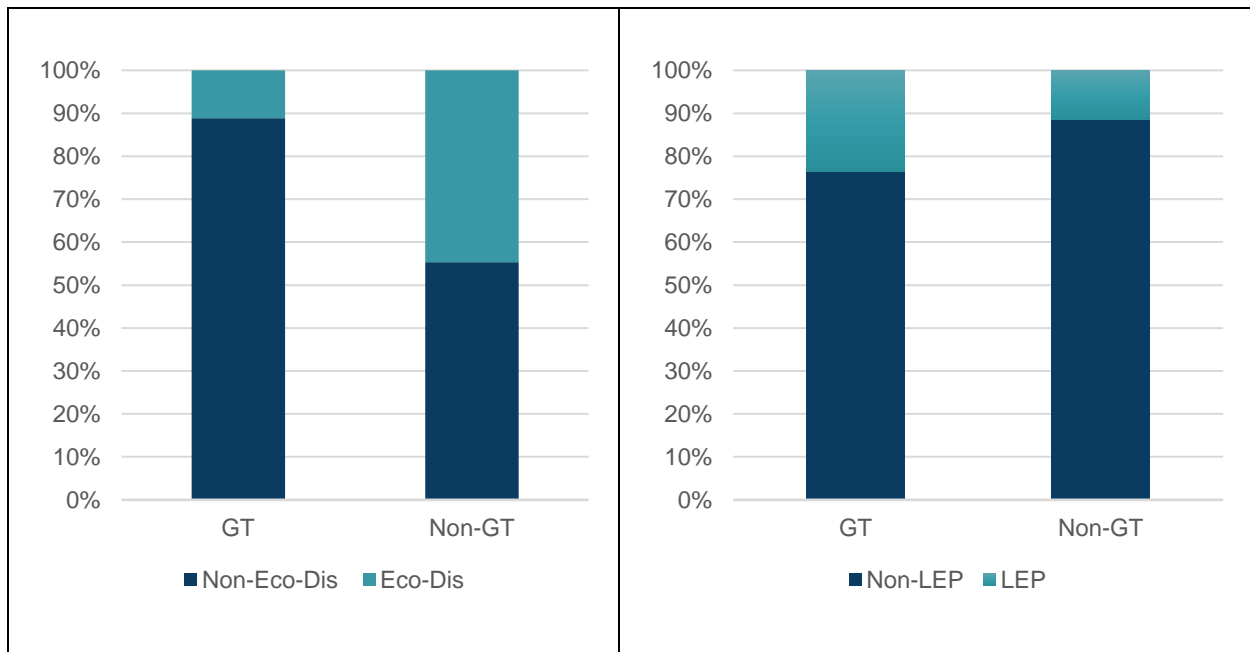
Figure 8. Fort Bend ISD GT and Non-GT Student Representation by Race/Ethnicity, 2020-21



Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

Representation of the GT student population also differs from the non-GT student population with respect to the percentage of students that are economically disadvantaged (underrepresented in the GT student population) and LEP (slightly over-represented in the GT student population).

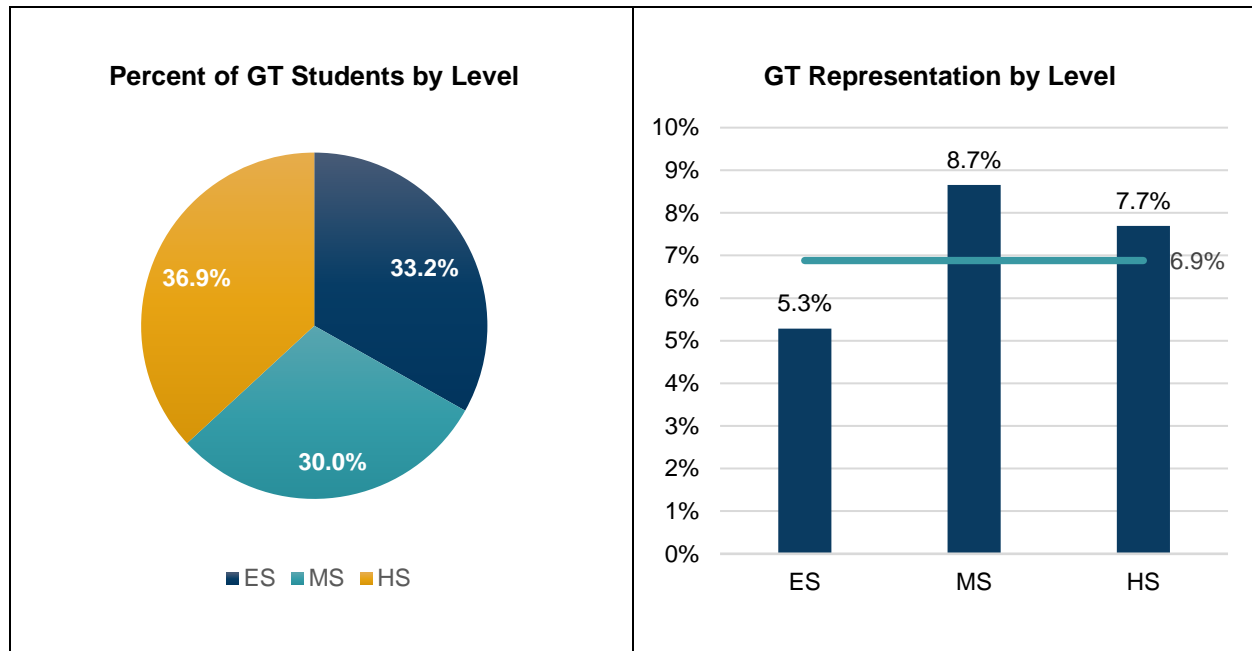
Figure 9. Fort Bend ISD GT and Non-GT Student Representation by Economically Disadvantaged and LEP Status, 2020-21



Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

In 2020-21, less than two percent of the GT student population are students with disabilities (1.7%) or Dyslexia (0.2%).

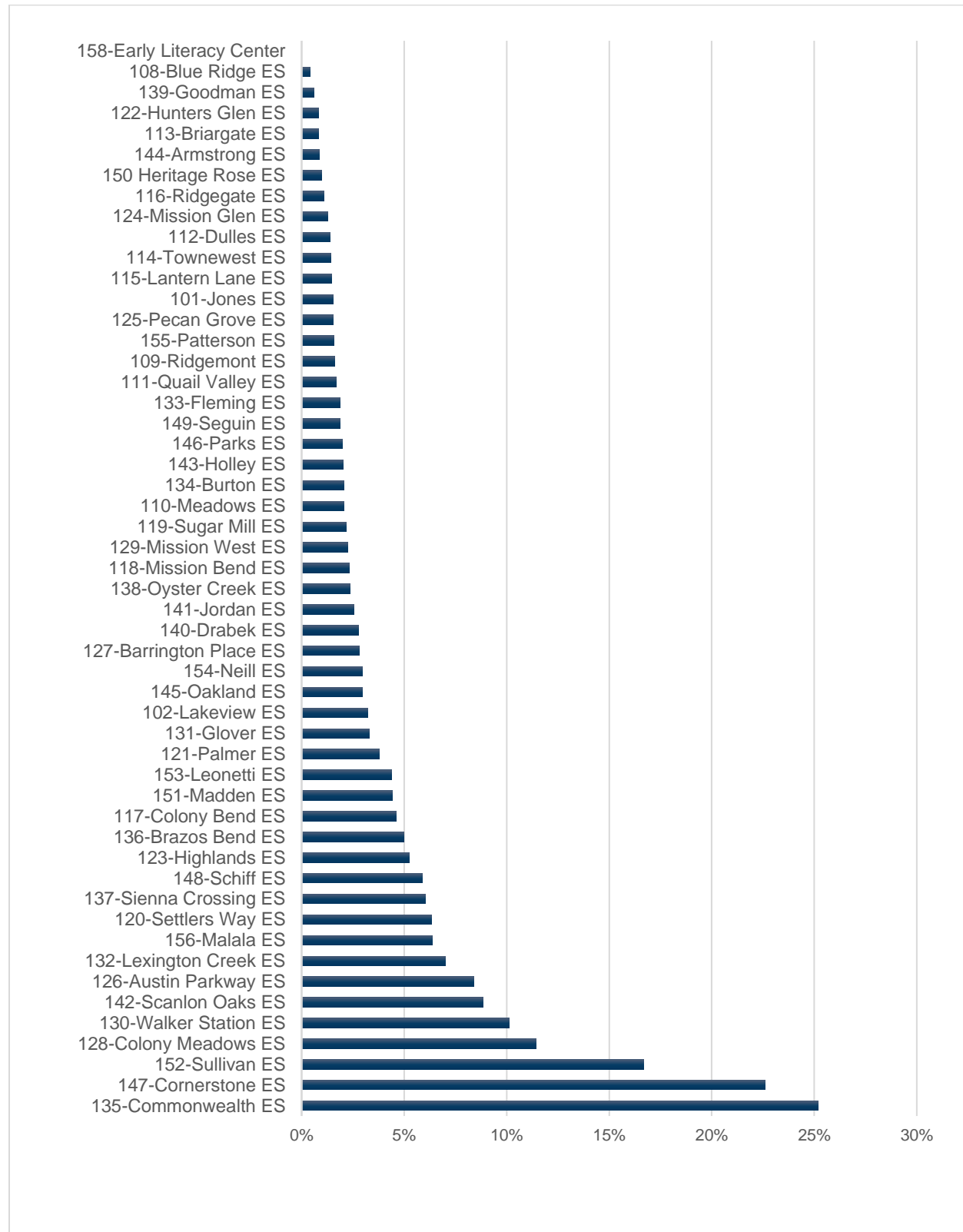
As shown in Figure 10 below, the total number of GT students is fairly evenly represented across school levels, with roughly one-third of GT students at elementary schools, a slightly lower percentage at middle schools (30%), and a slightly higher percentage at high schools (36.9%). Within school levels, GT representation is lowest at elementary schools (5.3%) and highest at middle schools (8.7%).

Figure 10. Percent of GT Students and Representation of GT Students by School Level, 2020-21

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has set five percent as the “standard” or goal to ensure that campuses are adequately identifying students for GT. While Fort Bend ISD meets this standard overall (6.9%), it does not meet this standard for the majority of its campuses.

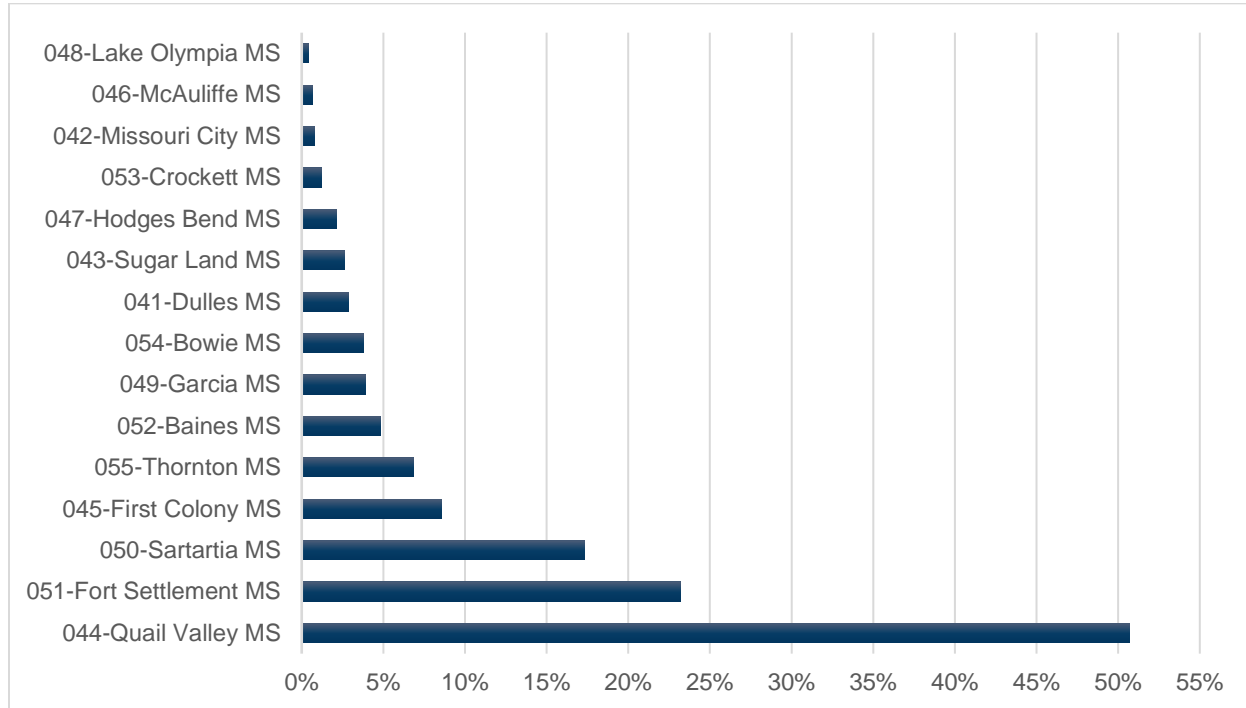
At the elementary level, GT representation ranges from 0.4 percent at the Blue Ridge Elementary School to 25.2 percent at the Commonwealth Elementary School; 73.1 percent of all elementary schools have less than FIVE percent of students identified as GT (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Representation of GT Students by Elementary School, 2020-21

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

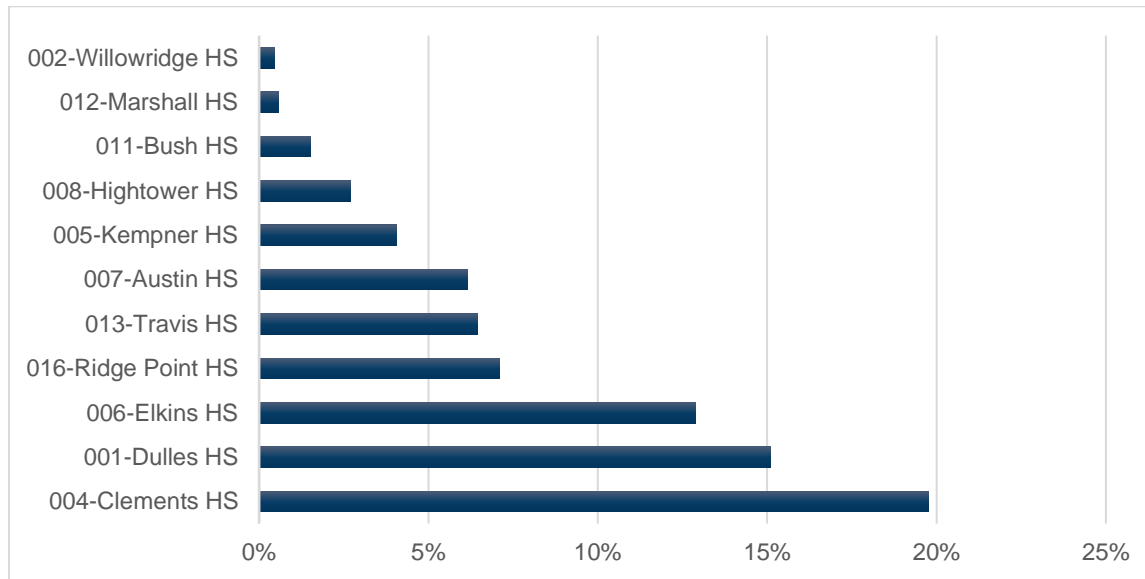
At middle schools, representation of GT students ranges from 0.4 percent at Lake Olympia Middle School to 50.7 percent at QVMS, which houses the GT Academy (Figure 12). Two-thirds of all middle schools have less than 5 percent of students identified as GT.

Figure 12. Representation of GT Students by Middle School, 2020-21



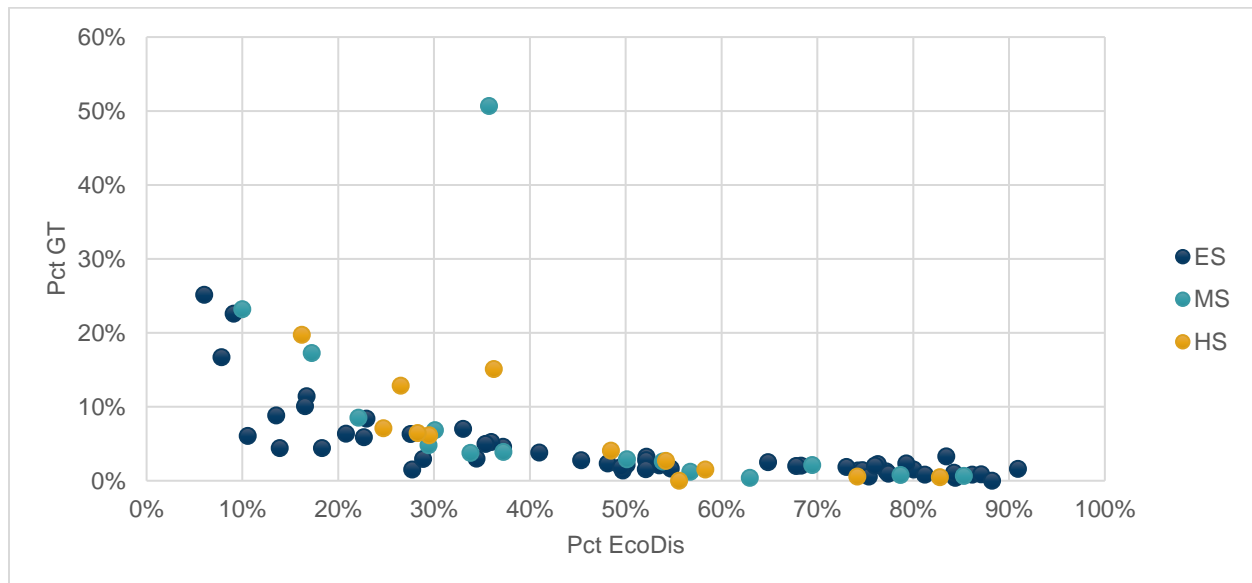
Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

At high schools, representation of GT students ranges from 0.5 percent at Willowridge High School to 19.8 percent at Clements High School, and 45.5 percent of all high schools have less than 5 percent of students identified as GT (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Representation of GT Students by High School, 2020-21

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

Across all school levels, there is an apparent inverse relationship between the percentage of students on a campus that are economically disadvantaged and the percentage of students that are identified as GT (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Representation of GT and Economically Disadvantaged Students by Campus, 2020-21

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Data (DR#40)

GT Student Identification Process in Fort Bend ISD

Fort Bend ISD has Board-approved GT identification procedures and processes for students in Grades K through 11. These procedures meet state requirements in Texas Education Code §29.121 and Texas

Administrative Code §89.1, and are documented in the *2020-21 Gifted and Talented Handbook*. These procedures are designed to ensure the identification of any students who perform, or show potential for performing, at remarkably high levels within the District. The identification process consists of three phases: referral, assessment, and identification.

Referral

Any student may be referred as a potential candidate for gifted services. Parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors may refer students for evaluation if they believe the student exhibits characteristics indicating giftedness. Students may also refer themselves. Each year, the initial referral window opens on the first day of school and remains open until September 30.

A second referral window is available for one month in the spring semester for 1) any student who enrolls in the District after the closing of the fall nomination window, and 2) any student currently identified for GT services and is being referred for identification in additional content areas.

Assessment

The coordination of testing and collection of data is the responsibility of the designated GT Counselor on each campus. In Grades K through 11, qualitative and quantitative data are collected from three or more sources and used to determine if the data indicate a need for GT services for each area of giftedness served by the District.

Quantitative data sources include:

- The **Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)** is a multiple-choice test designed to measure a child's academic aptitude and gifted abilities. The format of CogAT, the method of administration, and the types of test tasks are developmentally appropriate for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Each of the three batteries (Verbal, Quantitative, and Nonverbal) has three subtests, and all three of the batteries have been designed to appraise inductive and deductive reasoning abilities and also specific reasoning abilities that are unique to the battery. Accommodations are allowed for students who have supports documented in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- **Achievement data** may be used to examine performance on taught curriculum.

Qualitative data sources include:

- The **Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS)** is a standardized, norm-referenced instrument completed by teachers or parents and provides an effective method for identifying gifted children. The SIGS is composed of seven scales: general intellectual ability, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, creativity, and leadership. SIGS consists of two rating scales that can be used together or independently: a Teacher Rating Scale and a Home Rating Scale. The teacher rating scales serve as an instrument for identifying observed behaviors associated with gifted children in a school setting, while the home rating scales serve as an instrument for identifying observed behaviors associated with gifted children at home and in the community. A Spanish-language version of the Home Rating Scale is available.

- **Learning artifacts** (i.e., examples of student work) illustrating the need for consistent differentiation may be submitted by teachers when quantitative data appear to be mismatched with teacher ratings.

Identification

Following the referral and assessment process, student data is collected and examined by the CSC, which is comprised of a campus administrator and/or a GT Counselor, and at least three teachers who have met the GT training requirements. Student data is plotted on the Fort Bend ISD Gifted and Talented Identification Profile. The CSC reviews each student profile and submits it to the GT Department for administrative review. Every profile is reviewed by at least one member of the GT Department to check for accuracy. GT Counselors meet individually with GT Department staff to review student profiles, with additional time spent on profiles with identified issues. After the meeting, GT Counselors make corrections, and the student profiles go through the administrative review process again. Only profiles that have been reviewed by the CSC and pass through the administrative review process are printed and sent to parents.

Students are identified to receive services in the core academic areas in the following combinations: Math and Science, Language Arts and Social Studies, or all four content areas. An appeals process is in place for parents who wish to appeal the decision about the selection of services for their child.

Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations

Commendation 2: The GT Department has implemented changes in assessment protocols to increase the identification of underrepresented students in the GT program.

To address the long-term pattern of underrepresentation of Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students in the GT program, the Department implemented several research-based strategies to the identification and assessment process. These include the implementation of a universal screener for all students in Grade 2 and the establishment of local norms in assessments:

- **Universal Screening** – In 2018-19, Fort Bend ISD began implementing the use of a universal screener (CogAT) for all students in Grade 2. Prior to this time, students were only tested after they had been referred to the GT program by a parent or teacher. Universal screening has been shown through research to be an effective practice for identifying underrepresented student populations for GT. The 2020-21 academic year is the first year the District is serving students that were identified through universal screening.
- **Local Norms** – In 2019-20, the Department began implementing the use of local norms in the CogAT by school feeder pattern in the identification and assessment process in an effort to further increase equity and access to GT programming. Unlike national norms that compare a student's performance to peers from the same age or grade from across the United States, local norms compare a student's performance to grade level peers in the same district or school. The use of narrowly defined comparison groups, such as race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status, reveals which

students, given similar backgrounds and circumstances, are achieving or have the potential to achieve at advanced levels.⁸

To provide context, Gibson collected and reviewed publicly available information from each of the comparator district websites to better understand their GT student referral, assessment, and identification practices. All of the comparator districts appear to meet the State Plan requirement (2.22) that both qualitative and quantitative data are collected from three or more measures and used to determine whether a student needs GT services. Table 14 below provides a summary of the observations related to student referral and identification practices from each district. The three notable observations from the benchmarking assessment are:

- Only one other district, Humble ISD, specifically references the use of locally normed assessments. Humble ISD also accepts assessment data conducted by other non-District licensed or certified personnel.
- North East ISD requires that all students be re-assessed for GT services to remain in the program at the secondary level.
- Spring Branch ISD includes three planned experience activities as part of the assessment process.

Table 14. GT Student Referral and Identification Practices of Comparator Districts

Comparator District	GT Student Referral and Identification Practices
Katy ISD	Universal screening for all students in Kindergarten. Screening may include, but is not limited to, ability tests, achievement tests, intelligence tests, classroom gifted characteristics observation, checklists, student interview, and student work products.
Spring Branch ISD	Screening includes a parent evaluation, teacher evaluation, most recent MAP scores, three planned experience activities (planned experiences are sets of high-level, open-ended activities designed to illicit and diagnose gifted behavior). Verbal, quantitative, and non-verbal nationally-normed cognitive abilities tests are used.
Conroe ISD	Students are assessed in languages they understand, or using a non-verbal assessment. Students in the bilingual program are tested in their native language.
North East ISD	Nationally normed assessments are used in the following areas: reading and math achievement; verbal, quantitative, non-verbal, spatial reasoning, and qualitative data. Students qualify at the elementary level and remain in the program through Grade 5. Students are reassessed for the secondary program. If a student qualifies at the secondary level, they remain in the program through high school.
Humble ISD	Screening includes both national and local normed assessments; ability tests, achievement tests (Grades 3+), screening instruments, parent and teacher surveys, portfolio/performance reviews, and a student questionnaire or interview. The District accepts assessment data conducted by other licensed or certified personnel. Identified students remain in the program from one grade to the next. Qualified students receive services beginning in August of the upcoming school year.

Source: Comparator district websites

⁸ <https://www.wku.edu/gifted/rap/using-local-norms.pdf>.

Finding 8: The proprietary GT Application used to manage the online referral and identification process has limited functionality and reporting capabilities.

The purpose of the GT referral is to allow parents, teachers, or other individuals to refer students for testing who they believe may need gifted services in Fort Bend ISD. In doing so, districts are required to collect and maintain records of all student referrals for use during the assessment process and annual reporting. In 2017, the Department developed and implemented the use of an online application, referred to as the GT Application, to automate and streamline the student referral, assessment, and identification process. Parents can also submit an appeal using the online application. The GT Application was developed in-house and is used to manage all assessment data for current and archived screenings. It has been estimated by the Department that the GT Application eliminated the need for 20,000 paper documents, which has subsequently promoted more efficiency and consistency in the GT referral process across campuses. The online referral form is available during the referral window on the District's website at gt.fortbendisd.com.

While the Department is commended for implementing an online GT referral application, there is still some room for improvement. First, the GT Application is only offered in English. The State Plan (2.2 and 2.3) requires that "referral procedures/forms for assessment of GT students are communicated/provided to families in a language and form that families understand, or a translator or interpreter is provided to the extent possible." The exemplary standard (2.3.1) states that "referral forms for assessment of GT students are provided to families in a language and form that the families understand, or a translator or interpreter is provided." Given the linguistic diversity of families in Fort Bend ISD, the Department could further improve the GT Application by making it available in Spanish and other predominant languages. Fort Bend ISD must ensure that a student's home language does not represent a barrier in the referral and identification process.

The GT Application still lacks some functionality and reporting capabilities that would further streamline the identification process. For example, management is unable to query the current application to determine how many students at a Title I campus qualified for GT under the local norm or the non-Title standard. Reporting on this type of information would require a manual process of reviewing each individual student profile. As another example, campus-level appeals are currently managed through the GT Application, but District-level appeals are not, limiting the ease of management's ability to report on related indicators. Improving system functionality is addressed incrementally by the Department as budget and time constraints permit.

Finding 9: The process for documenting student furloughs, exits, and transfers is paper-driven, limiting the GT Department's ability to effectively monitor and track the accuracy of GT student enrollment data and other indicators.

According to the *2020-21 Student Attendance Accounting Handbook*, the TEA requires that districts code students receiving services through a State-approved gifted and talented program with a gifted/talented indicator code of 1 in the Student Detail Report. Only students that are identified and served in the program may be included in the GT enrollment. The TEA further specifies that at the beginning of each school year and at the end of each six-week reporting period the Student Detail Report must be verified to ensure that the coding of GT students is correct and that students are only counted once. Attendance personnel are responsible for recording the gifted/talented indicator code in the attendance accounting system.

A furlough allows a student to take a “leave of absence” from the GT program for specified reasons, and for a designated period without being exited from the program. District policy prohibits furloughs for less than a semester or longer than a year from the effective beginning date. While furloughed, the student will retain gifted and talented eligibility but will not receive program services. Students who are exited from the program will not receive services for the remainder of that academic year; exited students who wish to reenter the following year must be reassessed and requalified. GT students who transfer schools in-district can only be counted once in the GT enrollment.

In Fort Bend ISD, the process for documenting a student furlough or exit from the GT program is initiated upon completion of the *Gifted and Talented Furlough/Probation/Exit Form* by the CSC. After meeting with the parent(s), the form is signed, retained by the GT Counselor for campus documentation, and a soft or hard copy is sent to either the elementary or secondary GT Program Manager in the GT Department. Management reports only two forms have been received by the Department this academic year (as of October 20, 2021), which raises questions among Department administrators as to whether or not students are being coded correctly in *Skyward* if they are furloughed or exited from the GT program.

The GT Department does not have any way to monitor in ‘real time’ whether or not GT students are coded correctly in *Skyward* when they furlough, exit, or transfer (in- or out-of-district). The GT Department relies on campuses to provide them with copies of the *Gifted and Talented Furlough/Probation/Exit* form, and will follow up accordingly with each campus at the end of the year to obtain any unsent copies. This paper-driven process inhibits the Department’s ability to monitor patterns and trends related to GT students that are furloughing or exiting the GT program in a timely manner, or address any root causes that may be contributing to them.

As described in *Chapter 2 – Organization, Staffing, and Program Management*, an audit of a sample population of GT students found that two of the 40 students (5%) who were identified as GT in the October Snapshot enrollment file were later determined by the Department not to be currently identified GT students. The Department did not have any corresponding documentation to demonstrate that these two students are on furlough, exited the GT program, or transferred out-of-district.

Recommendation 8: Implement system enhancements to further streamline the identification process and improve reporting capabilities.

Implementation of an integrated GT program management software application, a recommendation made in *Chapter 2 – Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management*, would streamline GT administrative processes and significantly improve management’s reporting capabilities. The above two findings provide further justification for the District to invest in an integrated GT program management solution.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to implement system enhancements to streamline the identification process and acknowledges that implementation would require additional funding/resources. It will be up to District leadership to determine if resources can/should be reallocated based on the District's priorities.*

Finding 10: Patterns in GT referrals suggest inequitable practices across campuses.

The audit team analyzed student-level referral data over the past three years and makes the following observations. First, the total number of GT referrals has fluctuated over the past three years, likely due to the disruption to in-person learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. This context is important to consider, as research has shown that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on low-income and minority students (and in ways that extend beyond the scope of this audit). As shown in Table 15, the total number of GT referrals increased 17.1 percent (842 referrals) from 2018-19 to 2019-20, and then decreased 31.2 percent (1,797 referrals) from 2019-20 to 2020-21. The percentage of students that were ultimately identified as GT decreased year over year.

Table 15. Total GT Referrals and Percent of Students Identified, 2019-21

Referrals	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Total Referred	4,918	5,760	3,963
Total Identified	703	669	377
Percent Identified	14.3%	11.6%	9.5%

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Referral Data (DR#41)

Second, and not unexpectedly, the majority of GT referrals are made for students at the elementary level (Table 16). Despite the initial increase and subsequent decrease in GT referrals over this time period, Grade 2 is the only grade that experienced a decrease in referrals year over year. The fact that significantly fewer referrals are made for students in Grades 6 through 12 leaves open the possibility that students who miss being identified during their primary years are much less likely to be identified once they reach middle and/or high school.

Table 16. GT Student Referrals by Grade, 2019-21

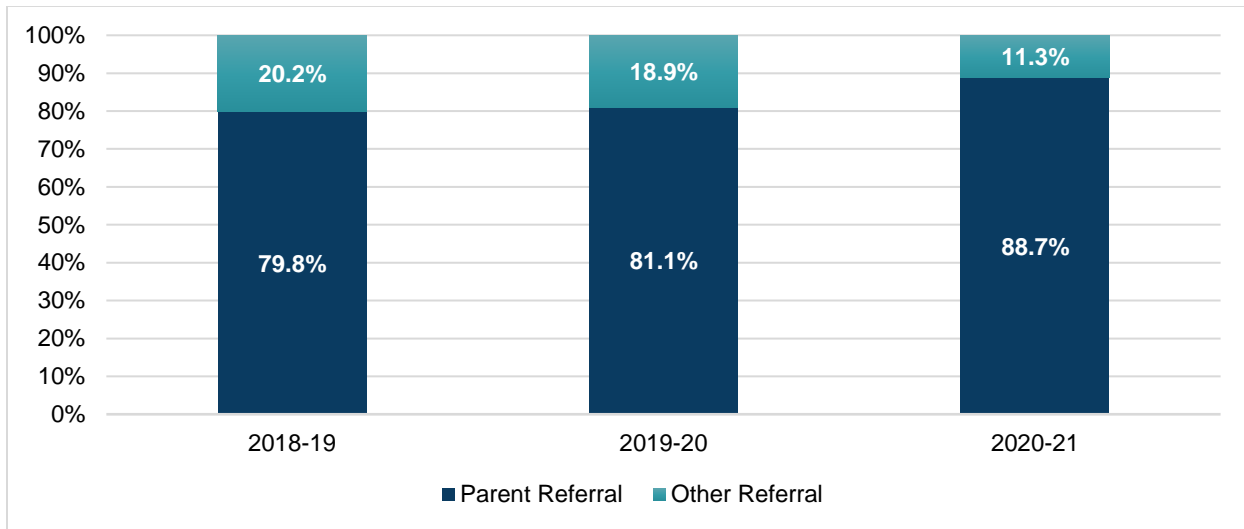
	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
Grade	# of Referrals	% of Referrals	# of Referrals	% of Referrals	# of Referrals	% of Referrals
KG	793	16.1%	969	16.8%	815	20.6%
1	854	17.4%	1016	17.6%	635	16.0%
2	1128	22.9%	1020	17.7%	584	14.7%
3	633	12.9%	737	12.8%	540	13.6%
4	538	10.9%	701	12.2%	459	11.6%
5	488	9.9%	626	10.9%	422	10.6%
6	158	3.2%	237	4.1%	179	4.5%
7	139	2.8%	191	3.3%	148	3.7%
8	125	2.5%	141	2.4%	92	2.3%
9	32	0.7%	56	1.0%	42	1.1%

	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21	
10	12	0.2%	38	0.7%	27	0.7%
11	13	0.3%	21	0.4%	17	0.4%
12	5	0.1%	7	0.1%	3	0.1%
Total	4,918	100%	5,760	100%	3,963	100%

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Referral Data (DR#41)

Third, the vast majority of all GT referrals are made by parents. In 2020-21, parent referrals accounted for 88.7 percent of all GT referrals, which represents an increase over prior years (Figure 15). Research shows that GT students come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata. However, minority and low-income students often lack a parent advocate to push for inclusion in the GT program.⁹

Figure 15. GT Referrals by Source, 2019-21



Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Referral Data (DR#41)

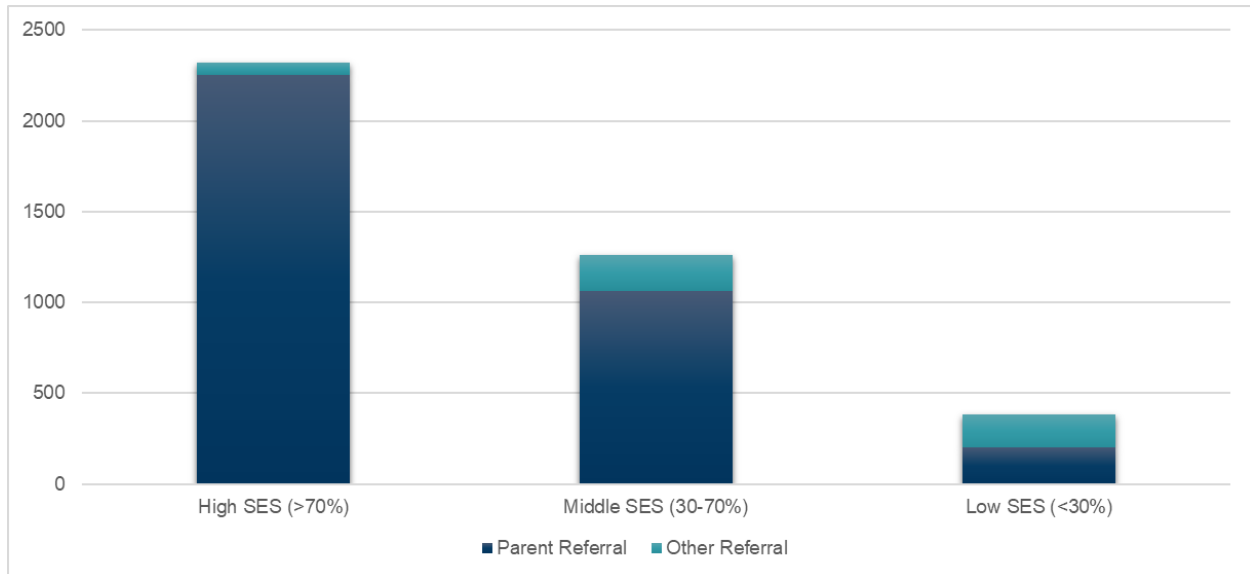
Further analysis of referral data finds that in 2020-21, one-third (26) of all campuses in Fort Bend ISD had no GT referrals made by someone other than a parent. This includes 11 of the 52 elementary schools, 5 of the 15 middle schools, and 10 of the 11 high schools. Eighteen campuses had just one or two referrals made someone other than a parent. This is significant, as it points to a need to widen the circle of adults on campuses scouting for students who show potential for performing at remarkably high levels.

Fourth, few referrals are made for students at campuses with low socio-economic status (SES) student populations. Figure 16 shows the total number of GT referrals made by parents and non-parents at campuses with high (n = 24), middle (n = 32), and low (n = 22) SES student populations. This too is significant as it points to a need for both staff and parents of students at campuses with low SES student

⁹ National Association for Gifted Children.

populations to be more educated about the nature and needs of gifted students so that they can recognize students that show potential and refer them for testing.

Figure 16. Total GT Referrals by Source and Campus SES Percentage, 2019-21



Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Referral Data (DR#41)

Finally, GT referrals made at campuses with low SES student populations tend to result in fewer students being identified as compared to referrals made at campuses with high or middle SES student populations (Table 17). Notably, in 2019-20, the percentage of referred students that were ultimately identified was nearly equal for campuses with both high and low percentages of SES student populations.

Table 17. Total GT Referrals and Percent of Students Identified by Campus SES Bucket, 2019-21

Referrals	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
High SES (>70%)	17.8%	12.7%	12.5%
Middle SES (30-70%)	11.2%	9.4%	5.7%
Low SES (<30%)	7.5%	12.4%	4.2%
Total Referred	4,918	5,760	3,963

Source: Fort Bend ISD Student Referral Data (DR#41)

Further, the uneven distribution of GT students across campuses leads to a perception that some campuses are “over-identifying” GT students (e.g., Cornerstone Elementary has more than 25 percent of students identified as GT). It is not uncommon for more affluent parents to encourage their child to “study” for the screening assessments. Popular websites like TestingMom.com provide fee-based resources for practice questions, test prep, and other tips and tricks to “passing” GT assessments.

One of the root causes for the uneven referral practices observed across campuses is the fact that nearly all of the professional development related to GT programming is delivered to teachers of GT students, school counselors, and select campus administrators, in an effort to meet the compliance standards and

training requirements set forth in the State Plan. This means that a high percentage of teachers and other campus-based staff have not received any formalized training regarding the common characteristics and traits of gifted learners and therefore may also not be familiar with the referral process. This is exacerbated at campuses with already low numbers of GT-trained teachers.

Recommendation 9: Implement strategies to increase the number of GT referrals made by campus administrators and staff.

The above analysis highlights gaps in referral practices that must be addressed in order to improve equity and access to GT programming. Addressing the challenge of underrepresented students in the GT population should include strategies for increasing referrals made by campus administrators, teachers, other instructional staff, and parents, particularly at secondary schools and at those campuses with low SES student populations. Fort Bend ISD should consider implementing the following strategies to increase the number of GT referrals made by campus administrators and other staff:

- Provide training annually to *all* classroom teachers, including special education and bilingual/ELL teachers, and other related service providers, such as social workers and school psychologists, so that they can recognize and discern the common characteristics and traits of gifted learners from other high-achieving students. Because the characteristics of gifted learners who are of low-socio-economic status, culturally or linguistically diverse, or are twice exceptional (i.e., students with disabilities) often differ from the traditional characteristics of gifted learners, any training provided must address these traits as well.
- Incorporate the use of research-based checklist items that promote recognition of giftedness in cultural, racial minority groups, and other underrepresented groups through materials, training, and outreach activities.
- Ensure that all campus administrators and staff are familiar with the GT referral process and timeline. Because the referral window occurs early in the school year (discussed further below) when there are many other activities competing for the time and attention of campus administrators and staff, frequent communications about the referral process from the GT Department, GT Administrators, and COGS are needed. Utilize the COGS to support teachers during the referral process and to advocate for students on their campus who show potential for performing at a high level.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Response to Intervention (RTI) processes at campuses, as the fidelity with which those intervention frameworks are being implemented may also be impacting student referrals. It is not uncommon for staff to target interventions at only those students who are performing below level.
- Examine the referral and identification practices at campuses with low-SES populations that have relatively high percentages of GT students (e.g., Glover ES, Kempner HS) for the purpose of replicating effective or high-impact referral practices.
- Encourage student self-referrals by increasing efforts to promote the most popular components of the GT program (e.g., the TPSP, the GT Mentorship Program, Showcase), particularly for students

at the secondary level. Katy ISD, for example, posts videos of GT student testimonials on the District's website.

- Consider assessing all students in Grade 6 with the use of universal screener or standardized assessment. This will help to identify more students at the secondary level.

Increasing parent referrals for students at campuses with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students requires specific strategies aimed at improving parent communications and outreach. The GT Department should support campuses in their communications and outreach efforts to increase education and awareness of all parents regarding the common characteristics and traits of GT students. In addition, parents at high-SES campuses also need to be educated regarding the nature and needs of gifted learners to help dispel the perception that GT programming is something to aspire to in an effort to address the potential issue of over-referrals at some campuses. The rigor of Tier 1 instruction at campuses with very high percentages of GT students (e.g., Commonwealth ES, Cornerstone ES, Sullivan ES, Fort Settlement MS) should be further evaluated.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to implement strategies to increase the number of GT referrals made by campus administrators and staff. The GT Department has examined the referral data and is working collaboratively with stakeholders to better understand this issue and determine next steps by BOY 2022-23.*

Finding 11: The District's GT referral timeline may inadvertently inhibit the identification of some students.

The State Plan accountability standard (2.14) states that "provisions for ongoing identification of students who perform or show potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment in each area of giftedness served by the district are included in board-approved policy." The State Plan exemplary goal (2.14.1) states that "the identification process for gifted/talented services is ongoing, and assessment of students occurs at any time the need arises."

The 2020-21 GT student referral, assessment, and identification timeline in Fort Bend ISD is as follows:

- **Referrals (Nomination)** – The initial referral window opens on the first day of school and remains open until September 30th. A second referral window is available for three weeks in February for any student who enrolls in the District after October 1st, and for any currently identified GT student who wishes to qualify for GT in another content area.
- **Assessments (Screening)** – The fall testing window is a two-week window, which typically spans late October to early November. The spring testing window is a one-week window, which typically occurs in February.
- **Identification (Selection)** – The CSC's meet in February to review fall referrals, and in March to review spring referrals. Parents are notified in writing of the CSC's determination in February (for parents of Kindergarten) and in April for all other students.
- **Appeals** – Level I and Level II appeals take place in April and May, respectively.

The provision of GT services for students in Kindergarten begins in March of the current year (as required by State law), while the provision of GT services for students in all other grade levels begins the following school year.

While Fort Bend ISD follows a well-defined three-stage process to identify students who require GT services, the timeline over which it is administered is narrow and somewhat inconsistent with the State Plan accountability goal that references an identification process that is “ongoing.” In group interviews, teachers expressed reservations about the early referral window (closing September 30), reasoning that they do not yet know some students well enough to refer them to GT for testing. The early referral timeline may be contributing to the overall low numbers of referrals made by campus administrators and staff.

The audit team reviewed the referral timelines of comparator districts and found some variation among them. Two of the comparator districts (Klein ISD and Humble ISD) have a referral deadline in September, similar to Fort Bend ISD. Three of the comparator districts offer later and/or staggered referral deadlines. Spring Branch ISD has a referral deadline of October 22, while Katy ISD and North East ISD have referral deadlines that are staggered by grade level from September to December.

Recommendation 10: Adjust the GT referral timeline.

The GT identification process is an in-depth process that requires input from multiple people, including teachers and parents. Extending the referral timeline past September 30, or shifting the referral window back a few weeks, would provide teachers and other school-based staff additional time for making referrals. This approach can be implemented at all campuses, or at select campuses (e.g., low-SES campuses). This is congruent with the previous recommendation to increase the number of referrals by teachers and other staff. As an option, the Department could allow any student (not just newly enrolled or currently identified GT students) to be referred during the spring referral window. This recommendation supports the District's alignment with the State Plan to ensure that the identification process is ongoing and better meets the needs of students who demonstrate or show potential for performing at a high level of accomplishment.

Management Response: *Management partially agrees with this recommendation. Management agrees that most GT referrals come from parents and would like to increase the number of teacher referrals. Teachers have expressed concern that they do not always know their students well at the beginning of the school year. To that end, rather than extending the GT referral timeline (which would impact the identification timeline), the GT Department will open an April/May referral window specifically for teachers. The GT Department will request that all teachers select and refer students for the upcoming fall-testing based on their experiences with their students during the current school year. In addition, these teachers will complete the Scales for Identifying Gifted Students (SIGS-2) form at the time of referral for their current students. These changes will occur for EOY 2021-22.*

Commendation 3: A centralized approach for reviewing all student referrals and Level 2 appeals ensures that the GT student identification process is implemented consistently and equitably.

As described previously, all student placement decisions are submitted by the CSC to the GT Department for administrative review. Each profile is reviewed by at least one member of the GT Department to check for accuracy. GT Counselors meet individually with GT Department staff to review student profiles, with additional time spent on profiles with identified issues. After the meeting, GT Counselors make any needed

corrections, and the student profiles go through the administrative review process again. Only profiles that have been reviewed by the CSC and pass through the administrative review process are printed and sent to parents. This centralized approach for reviewing all student profiles helps to ensure that the identification process is implemented consistently and equitably within and across campuses.

An appeals process is in place for parents who wish to appeal the decision about the selection of services for their child. During a Level 1 appeal, the CSC reviews the selection procedures and the student profile, along with any new information provided by a teacher and/or parent, and makes a determination. If the individual making the appeal wishes to appeal the decision of the Level 1 CSC, then a Level 2 appeal can be made to the District Appeals Committee. The District Appeals Committee is comprised of the GT Director, two central office administration staff, a principal, a GT-trained counselor, and a GT-trained teacher. Management reports that very few Level 2 appeals take place each year.

Finding 12: Implementation of the Vistas Talent Pool program has resulted in a modest increase in GT representation on Title I campuses, but some barriers to implementation fidelity still exist.

The Vistas Talent Pool (Vistas) program in Fort Bend ISD is intended to provide traditionally underrepresented students on Title I campuses with instruction that targets their verbal intelligence in order to help them excel academically and qualify for inclusion in the District's GT program. This program model is based on research that demonstrates that children raised in poverty tend to have underdeveloped verbal abilities and that developing students' verbal intelligence can positively affect other areas of academic achievement. The two primary objectives of the program are to: 1) increase representation of GT students on Title I campuses from less than one percent to three percent; and 2) provide identified students with enriched educational experiences that promote learning and intellectual development.

Students are selected for the Vistas program in Kindergarten using both quantitative (i.e., CogAT) and qualitative (i.e., teacher referrals based on student observations and work samples) measures. If selected, students begin to receive differentiated instruction beginning in Grade 1.

The Vistas program has been implemented in Fort Bend ISD for nearly 10 years. It was initially piloted with a cohort of students in 2011, and then after some adjustments, fully implemented the following year in 2012. In April 2017, the Department hired an external consultant to conduct a full-scale evaluation of the program in order to determine its effectiveness and identify areas in need of improvement. The results of that evaluation found that students who participated in the program demonstrated statistically significant gains in their verbal and quantitative literacy as measured on the CogAT. Recommendations for improving the program centered around improving the student selection process, ensuring that instruction is focused on improving students' verbal abilities, and building staff capacity through professional development.¹⁰

Subsequent to that comprehensive program evaluation, the Department is in the process of implementing several of the recommended changes, which included: 1) developing a Vistas curriculum; 2) developing a profile of a Vistas teacher; and, 3) providing job-embedded professional development to Vistas teachers. According to the Task Map, the Department intends to expand the Vistas program beyond the elementary level by 2024.

¹⁰ "Vistas Program Evaluation for the Fort Bend Independent School District," April 2017. Hanover Research.

A comparison of student enrollment data from 2016-17 to 2020-21 for the Vistas campuses shows that with two exceptions (Fleming Elementary and Mission Glen Elementary), representation of GT enrollment increased at all campuses. Glover Elementary, notably, is the only campus that met (and exceeds) the program objective of having three percent of students identified as GT.

Table 18. GT Representation at Vistas Talent Pool Campuses, 2017 – 2021

	2016-17		2020-21		Difference	
Campus	% GT	# GT	% GT	# GT	% GT	# GT
131-Glover ES	0.6%	3	3.3%	13	2.7%	10
146-Parks ES	0.5%	3	2.0%	12	1.5%	9
109-Ridgemont ES	0.2%	2	1.6%	5	1.4%	3
118-Mission Bend ES	1.3%	8	2.3%	9	1.1%	1
143-Holley ES	1.0%	6	2.0%	13	1.1%	7
101-Jones ES	0.5%	3	1.5%	8	1.0%	5
114-Townewest ES	0.4%	3	1.4%	8	1.0%	5
Campus	% GT	# GT	% GT	# GT	% GT	# GT
116-Ridgegate ES	0.2%	1	1.1%	5	0.9%	4
115-Lantern Lane ES	0.7%	3	1.4%	6	0.8%	3
113-Briargate ES	0.0%	0	0.8%	3	0.8%	3
134-Burton ES	1.5%	6	2.0%	8	0.6%	2
122-Hunters Glen ES	0.2%	1	0.8%	3	0.6%	2
144-Armstrong ES	0.3%	2	0.9%	4	0.5%	2
129-Mission West ES	1.8%	12	2.3%	13	0.4%	1
139-Goodman ES	0.1%	1	0.6%	4	0.4%	3
108-Blue Ridge ES	0.2%	1	0.4%	1	0.2%	0
150 Heritage Rose ES	0.9%	9	1.0%	11	0.1%	2
133-Fleming ES	2.0%	14	1.9%	10	-0.2%	-4
124-Mission Glen ES	2.2%	10	1.3%	5	-0.9%	-5
Total	0.8%	88	1.5%	141	0.7%	53

Source: Fort Bend ISD

Despite these improvements in representation of GT students at Title I campuses, persistent challenges related to the lack of program “buy-in” by some campus administrators and high teacher turnover within the program continue to exist. At the Kindergarten level, the ability of the GT-trained teacher in identifying students with gifted characteristics and documenting those observations for the selection process is integral to ensuring students are appropriately selected for the Vistas program. Feedback from Department administrators suggests that higher than average turnover of Kindergarten teachers at these campuses

(not just through attrition, but also from moving to other grade levels) makes it difficult to build the capacity of teachers in the program. Campus administrators who are not well-versed in the program objectives or components may not fully understand the impact of moving teachers that have been trained on student screening and research-based instructional practices from one grade level to the next.

Recommendation 11: Increase support and accountability structures to ensure campuses are implementing the Vistas Talent Pool program with fidelity.

The Vistas program, when implemented with fidelity, has been shown to increase equity and access to GT programming for students on Title I campuses. As with any program, the provision of ongoing support and accountability structures are needed to ensure that the program continues to make progress toward accomplishing the overarching goal of increasing GT representation on Title I campuses. The following strategies are recommended:

- Provide training to Vistas teachers throughout the year (beyond the initial 30-hour foundational training and six-hour update training) to ensure that they are appropriately trained on screening and research-based instructional practices. Ideally, training and feedback are provided through job-embedded supports to teachers.
- Support campus administrators with ongoing and specific training related to the Vistas program goals, selection procedures, instructional strategies used by Vistas teachers, and classroom walkthrough rubrics and “look-fors.” Encourage administrators to consider the assignment of GT-trained teachers for Vistas students when making any staffing and/or scheduling changes.
- Establish clear expectations for program implementation, including metrics to measure both the level of implementation fidelity as well as the level of effectiveness overall and by campus.
- Monitor implementation fidelity and provide ongoing support to campuses through increased school visits and classroom observations. The addition of one Specialists position (as recommended in *Chapter 2 – Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management*) would provide added capacity at the central office.
- Routinely collect, analyze, and publish student outcome data to promote program awareness and efficacy. Ensure that information systems (*Skyward*) allow for proper coding of Vistas students so that their status can be appropriately tracked if they transfer to another elementary school or when they matriculate to middle school.
- Evaluate the fidelity with which academic interventions are provided through the MTSS and RTI frameworks at the Title I campuses.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to increase support and accountability structures to ensure campuses are implementing the Vistas Talent Pool with fidelity. The GT Department is evaluating the effectiveness of the Vistas program and will finalize the revised plan by MOY 2022-23.*

Chapter 4 – Program Design and Implementation

This Chapter provides an assessment of Fort Bend ISD's GT service delivery model and the learning opportunities designed to meet the unique interests and abilities of GT students in elementary, middle, and high schools. This Chapter also presents the results of student surveys that were administered to gather information about GT student's educational experiences and their perceptions of Fort Bend ISD's GT program and services. The key themes that emerge from this Chapter are summarized below:

- A high percentage of elementary and secondary GT students that responded to the student survey perceive that their instruction is not differentiated to meet their unique learning needs.
- Qualitative feedback gathered through interviews and survey responses suggests that programs and services at the elementary level are not being implemented with fidelity. Recommendations are aimed at the two levers that will improve program fidelity: 1) the provision of ongoing and job-embedded professional development for GT-trained teachers; and 2) improved support and accountability structures for campus administrators.
- The GT Department is in the early stages of planning and piloting additional service options at the secondary level, which includes GT-specific AAC and AP courses, independent study courses, and expansion of the GT mentorship program. As with programs and services at the elementary level, ensuring campuses are supported through ongoing professional learning and tools and systems to provide for monitoring and feedback are essential to ensuring that campuses are implementing the service components with fidelity.

Fort Bend ISD GT Service Design and Delivery Model

According to the State Plan, the service design standard is defined as *“a flexible system of viable service options [that] provides a research-based learning continuum [and] that is developed and consistently implemented throughout the district to meet the needs and reinforce the strengths and interests of gifted and talented students”*. The State Plan allows school districts to have the flexibility to service GT students based on district resources and needs. The GT service design and other learning opportunities in Fort Bend ISD are described below.¹¹

At the elementary level, GT students in Grades K through 5 are “cluster grouped” with GT-trained teachers in order to provide opportunities for them to work with their cognitive peers. Cluster grouping places a select number of GT students together for instruction in the appropriate content area(s) for which they have been identified. A GT-trained teacher adapts the curriculum and environment for their GT learners with strategies such as curricular compacting; lesson differentiation to increase depth and complexity; and, implementation of the TPSP.

At the secondary level, identified GT students are required to enroll in AAC (Advance Academic Class) and AP course(s) offered in the academic fields for which they are identified. The AP Program is a nationally

¹¹ Fort Bend ISD Gifted and Talented Services Handbook 2020-21.

recognized set of rigorous classes, where students study advanced and in-depth material at an accelerated pace. Core AAC and AP teachers who teach GT students are trained to provide differentiated instruction for GT students according to their needs. Students may pay for AP exams for the opportunity to earn college credit.

Opportunities for acceleration are available at both the elementary and secondary levels. Credit by Exam (CBE) may be given when there has been no prior instruction for the tested content (students must score an 80 percent on an exam to receive course credit). Curricular compacting allows teachers to differentiate instruction by making adjustments to curriculum for students who have already shown a level of proficiency in the standard curriculum in order to provide them with learning experiences that are greater in depth and complexity.

Additional learning opportunities available to a select number of students at the secondary level include the GT Academy at QVMS and the high school GT Mentorship Program. The GT Academy provides instruction to students in Grades 6 through 8 that is designed to enhance self-awareness, self-efficacy, problem solving, and the learning of critical and creative thinking skills that empower students. Eligible students are admitted to the GT Academy through an application and lottery system; approximately 575 GT students were enrolled at the GT Academy in 2020-21. The GT Mentorship Program provides 25 high school seniors both independent research and mentorship opportunities in order to explore a field of interest more thoroughly. Students accepted into the program have the opportunity to work alongside a professional to expand their understanding of their field of interest. Classes and mentoring occur outside of the regular school day and students must have transportation to the Educational Complex and their accepted mentorship site. Students apply and are accepted into the program during their junior year; the program is currently capped at 25 students.

In addition to the differentiated instruction provided during the school day, campuses provide a variety of enrichment programs to students outside the regular school day. Some examples of the enrichment opportunities available to students include the GT Showcase (Grades K-5), Robotics (Grades 6-8), National Honor Society (Grades 6-12), Science Olympiad (Grades K-12), and Future Problem Solvers (Grades 4 - 2). The specific enrichment opportunities available to students vary across campuses.

In addition to the service design, the other element to GT programming in Fort Bend ISD is curriculum and instruction. The State Plan requires that *“districts meet the needs of GT students by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school.”* At all school levels, GT-trained teachers in Fort Bend ISD are expected to 1) provide differentiated instruction to GT students based on their unique learning needs, and 2) elevate instruction and assessment to include student responses that require learners to analyze, evaluate, and create original thought. At the elementary level, the TPSP is designed to provide learning experiences and research opportunities for GT students. Projects are based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and focus on the core areas with interdisciplinary connections. Students have the opportunity to present their projects at the end of the year at a campus (and possibly District) Gifted and Talented Showcase. At the secondary level, GT students have the opportunity to conduct research and develop sophisticated learning products at Science and History Fairs.

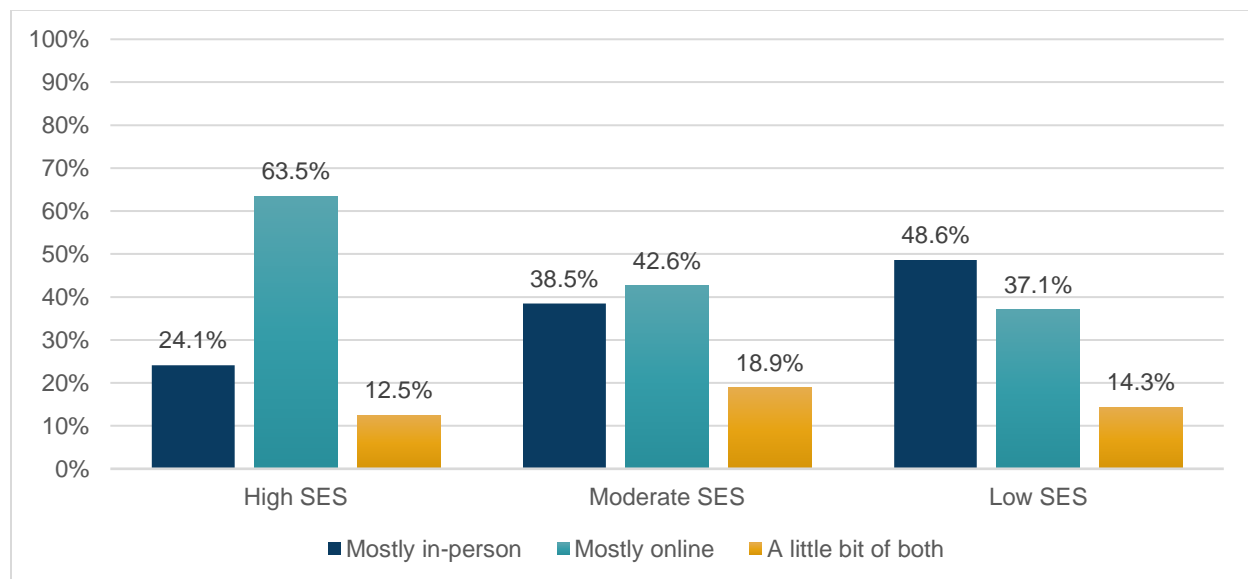
GT Student Survey Results

Gibson developed and administered two GT student surveys – one for GT students in Grades 3, 4, and 5, and one for GT students in Grades 6 through 12 – to gather information about their educational experiences and perceptions of Fort Bend ISD's GT program and services.

The GT student surveys were administered in May 2021. All GT students in Grades 3 through 12 were asked to reflect on their experiences this past school year when responding to the survey questions. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, students had the option of attending classes remotely (i.e., online), in-person, or a hybrid of both. Overall, 58.6 percent of elementary GT students and 73.9 percent of secondary GT students that responded to the survey indicated that they mostly attended classes online, while 27.7 percent of elementary GT students and 16.5 percent of secondary GT students indicated that they mostly attended classes in-person. Just 13.7 percent of elementary GT students and 9.6 percent of secondary GT students indicated that they attended classes both online and in-person during the 2020-21 school year.

As shown in Figure 17 below, elementary GT students at campuses with a high percentage of SES students mostly attended classes online (63.5%), while elementary GT students at campuses with a low percentage of SES students mostly attended classes in-person (48.6%). At the secondary level, there were no significant differences across campuses – with nearly 74 percent of all GT students reporting that they mostly attended classes online during the 2020-21 school year.

Figure 17. Percent of GT Students Who Report Attending Classes Online, In-Person, or Both, by Campus Economically Disadvantaged Percentage, Elementary Schools



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

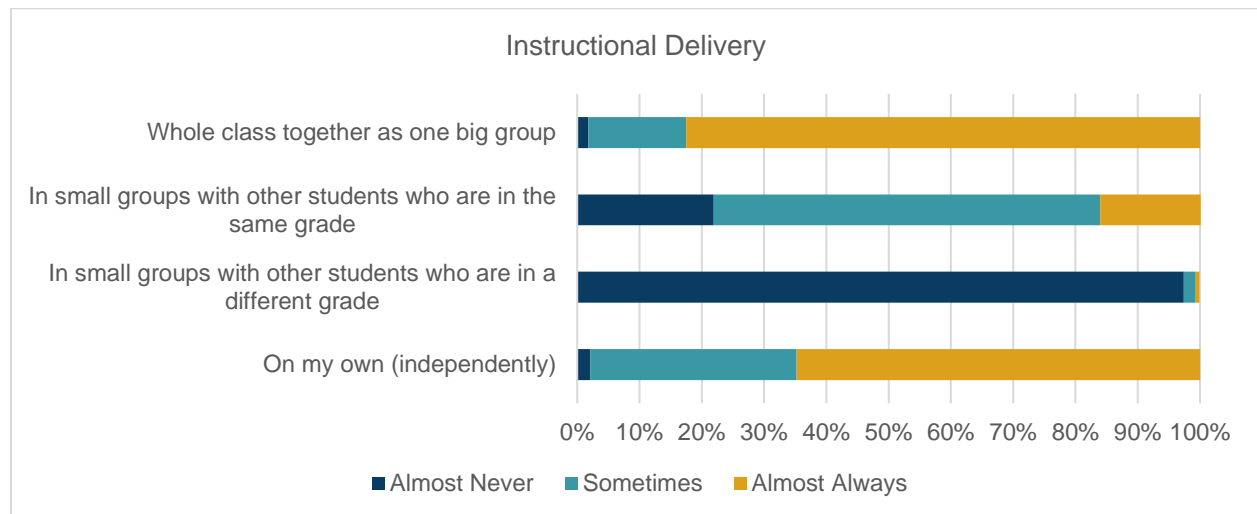
Elementary GT Student Survey Results

The elementary GT student survey asked students to rate their experiences and perceptions on the following topics: instructional delivery, instructional rigor and pace, the TPSP, and social and emotional supports.

Instructional Delivery

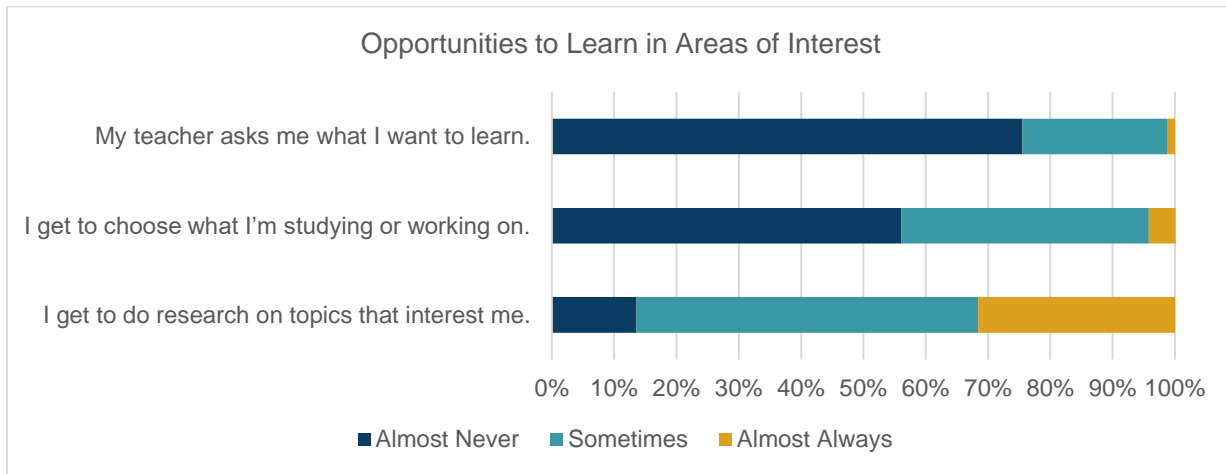
When asked about instructional delivery practices on a regular school day, 82.5 percent of elementary GT students indicated that their teacher(s) “almost always” teach the whole class together as one big group, while 78.2 percent of students indicated that they “sometimes” or “almost always” work in small groups with other students in their same grade (Figure 18). Just 2.5 percent of GT students indicated that they “sometimes” or “almost always” work in small groups with other students who are in a different grade. Nearly 65 percent of GT students indicated that they “almost always” have the opportunity to work independently during the school day.

Figure 18. Perceptions of Instructional Delivery (Elementary)



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

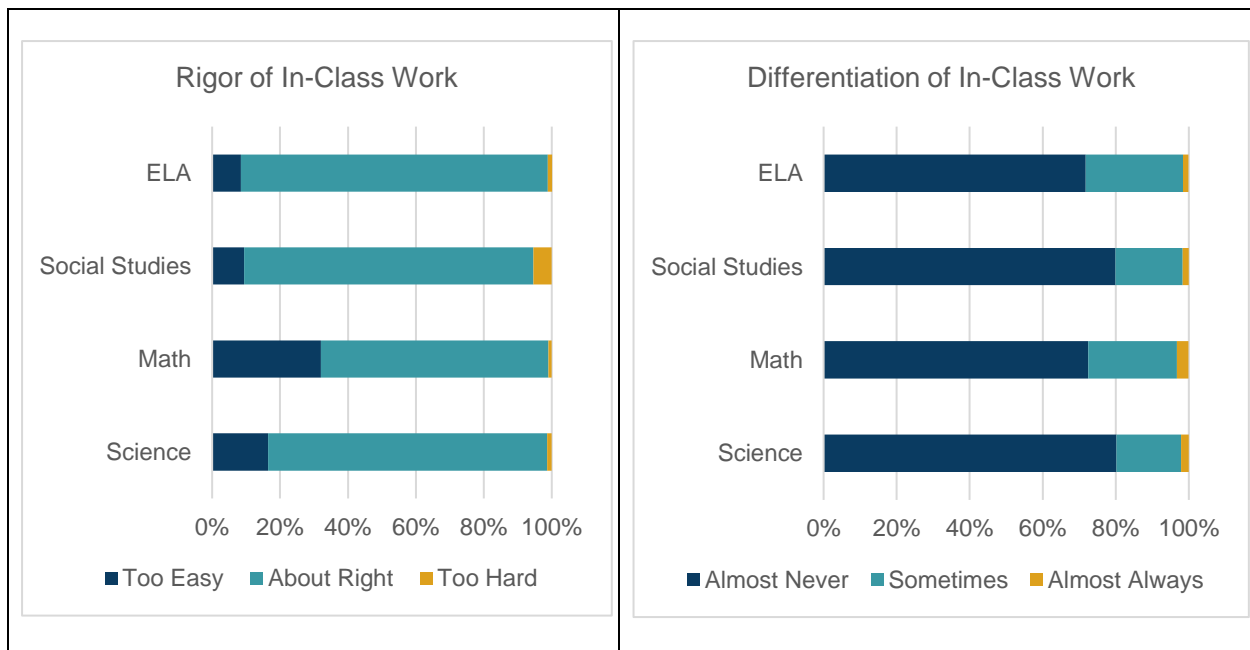
Seventy-five percent of elementary GT students indicated that their teachers “almost never” ask them what they would like to learn, and 56.1 percent of students indicated that they “almost never” get to choose what they are studying or working on. More than 86 percent of GT students indicated that they “sometimes” or “almost always” have the opportunity to research topics of interest.

Figure 19. Perceptions of Opportunities to Learn in Areas of Interest (Elementary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Instructional Rigor and Pace

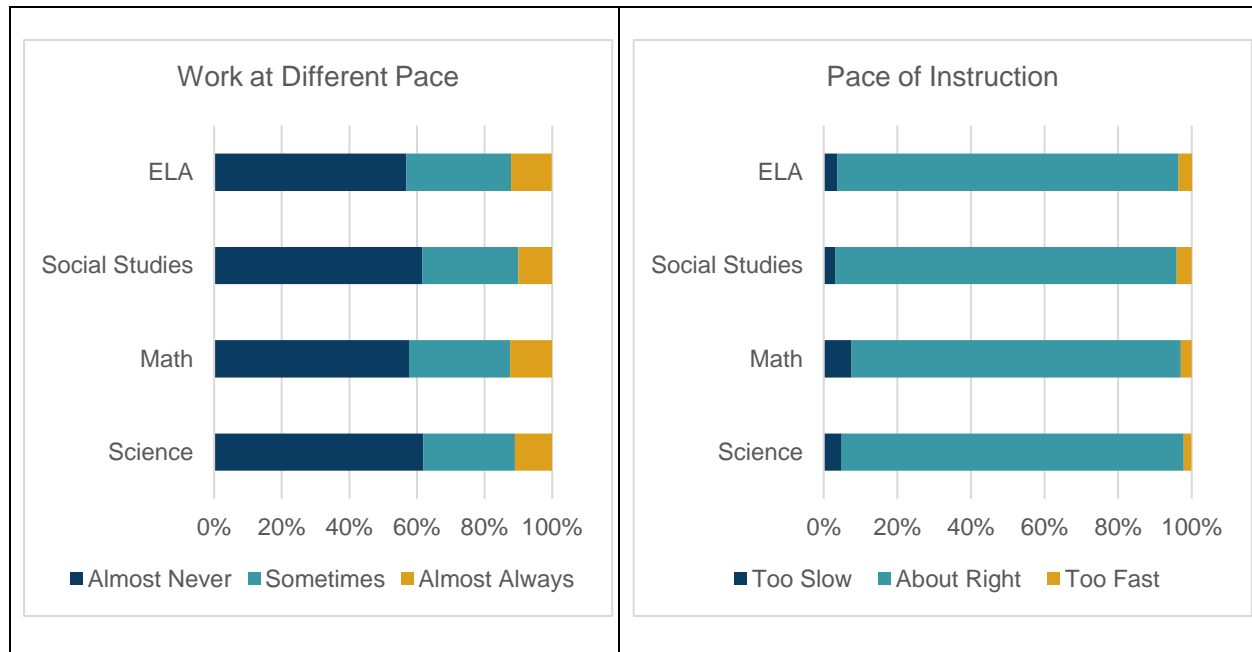
Across the four core content areas, a high percentage of elementary GT students that responded to the survey reported that the rigor of their in-class work in ELA, Social Studies, and Science is “about right,” while nearly one-third of GT students characterized their in-class work in Math as “too easy” (Figure 20). More than 72 percent of GT students that responded to the survey indicated that they “almost never” have the opportunity to work on in-class assignments that are different than what the rest of their class is working on.

Figure 20. Perceptions of In-Class Work (Elementary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

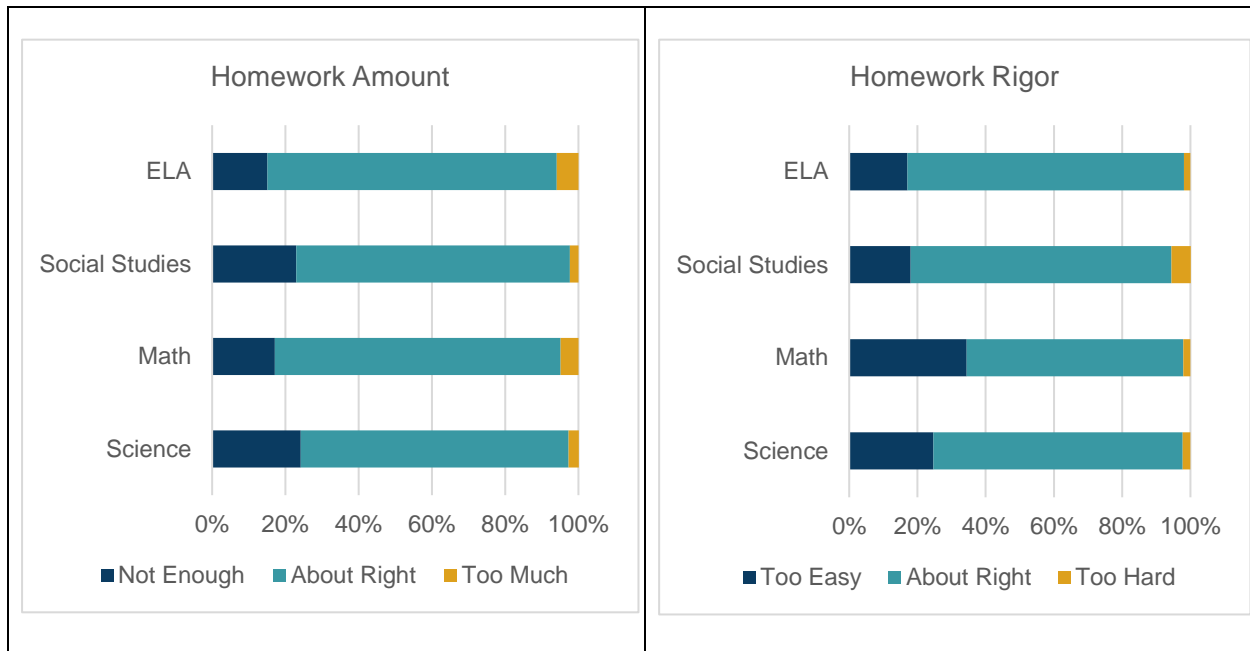
With regard to the pace of instruction, more than half of all GT students that responded to the survey reported that they “almost never” have the opportunity to work at a different pace than the rest of the class, while a small percentage of students indicated that the pace of instruction was either “too slow” or “too fast” (Figure 21).

Figure 21. Perceptions of Instructional Pace (Elementary)



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Across all core content areas, nearly three quarters of elementary GT students indicated that the amount of homework they have in ELA and Math is “about right,” while almost a quarter of GT students indicated that the amount of homework they have in Science and Social Studies is “not enough” (Figure 22). A high percentage of GT students also perceive that homework assignments are “too easy,” particularly in Math (34.4%) and Science (24.7%).

Figure 22. Perceptions of Homework Assignments (Elementary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Texas Performance Standards Project

Almost 90 percent of elementary GT students that responded to the survey indicated that they completed the TPSP this past school year. Nearly eighty-six percent of GT students indicated that they were told that they had to complete the TPSP, while 14.2 percent of GT students indicated that they were told that they could choose whether or not to complete the TPSP.

More than 96 percent of students indicated that they were allowed to pick their TPSP topic, and 67.8 percent of students indicated that they were “very interested” in their TPSP topic. Overall, 87.3 percent of students indicated that the level of difficulty in completing the TPSP this year was “about right,” and 80 percent of students indicated that the amount of time they spent working on the TPSP was also “about right.”

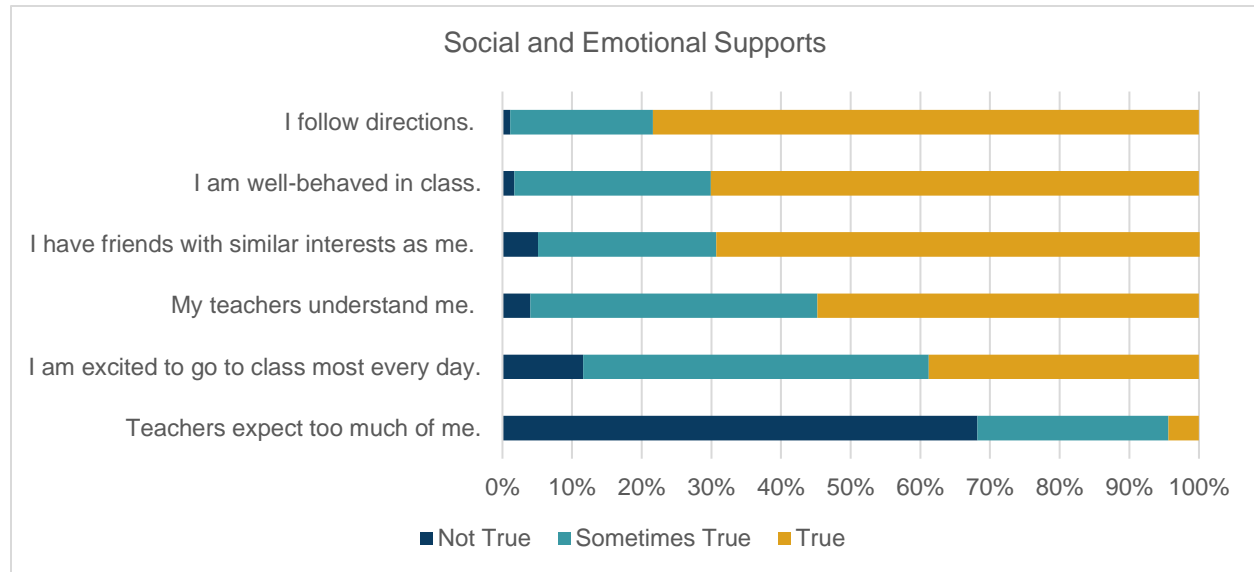
Social and Emotional Supports

To better understand whether the social and emotional needs of elementary GT students are being met by the District, the GT survey asked students to respond to a series of questions related to their perceptions of their social and emotional support systems (Figure 23). Overall, elementary GT students had positive responses about their own behavior – 78.4 percent report that they follow directions and 70.1 percent report that they are well-behaved in class. Almost 70 percent of students indicated that they have friends with similar interests, while 5.1 percent of students indicated that they did not.

With respect to teacher’s understanding and expectations of GT students, 54.8 percent of students feel that their teachers understand them and 68.2 percent of students do not feel that their teachers expect too much from them. Almost 39 percent of students indicated that they are excited to go to class every day, while over 11 percent of students were not. Although not shown in Figure 23 below, 59.2 percent of students

reported that there is at least one adult at school who they can talk to about their feelings; 11 percent of students indicated that there is not, and nearly 30 percent of students were not sure.

Figure 23. Perceptions of Social and Emotional Supports (Elementary)



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

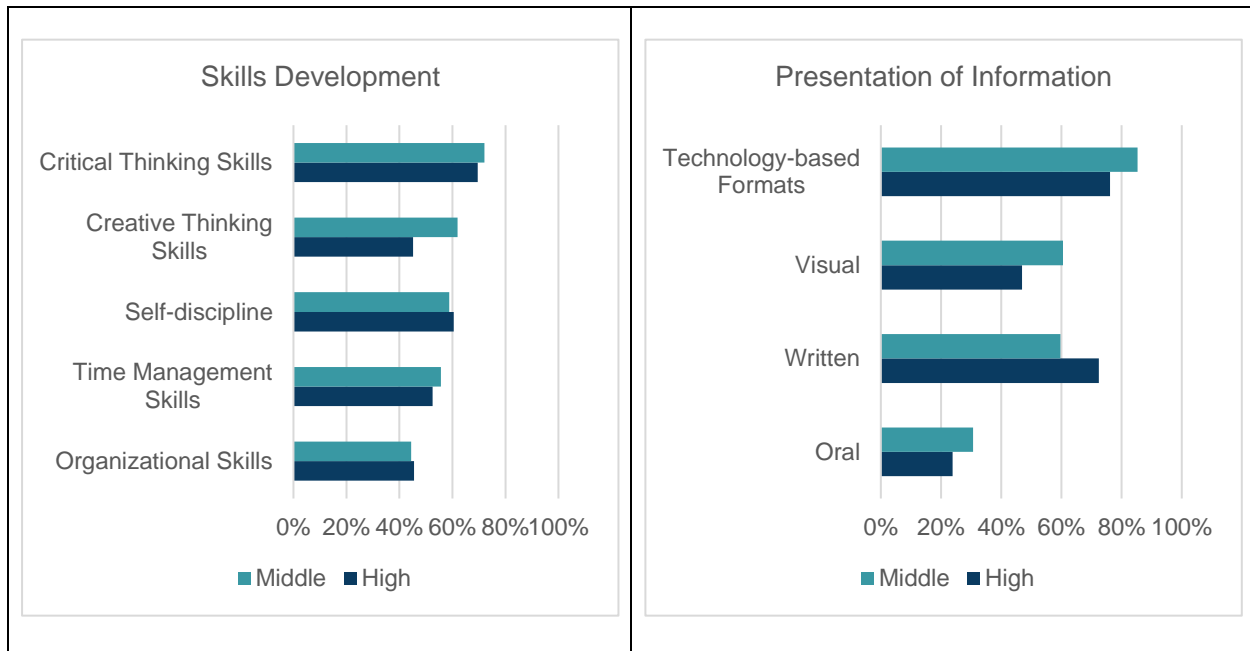
Secondary GT Student Survey Results

The secondary student survey covered many of the same topics as the elementary survey. In addition, students in Grades 11 and 12 were asked additional questions related to the GT Mentorship Program.

Instructional Delivery

More than 90 percent of secondary students who responded to the survey indicated that they are currently taking advanced courses in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies, and 60.2 percent of middle school students and 52.3 percent of high school students indicated that they mostly/very much enjoy learning in their advanced courses (Figure 24).

More than 70 percent of middle and high school GT students that responded to the survey perceive that their advanced courses help them develop their critical thinking skills, while less than half of students perceive that their advanced courses help them with their organizational skills (Figure 24). More than 76 percent of students perceive that their advanced courses help them communicate using technology-based formats, while less than 30 percent of GT students perceive that their advanced courses help them improve their oral communication skills.

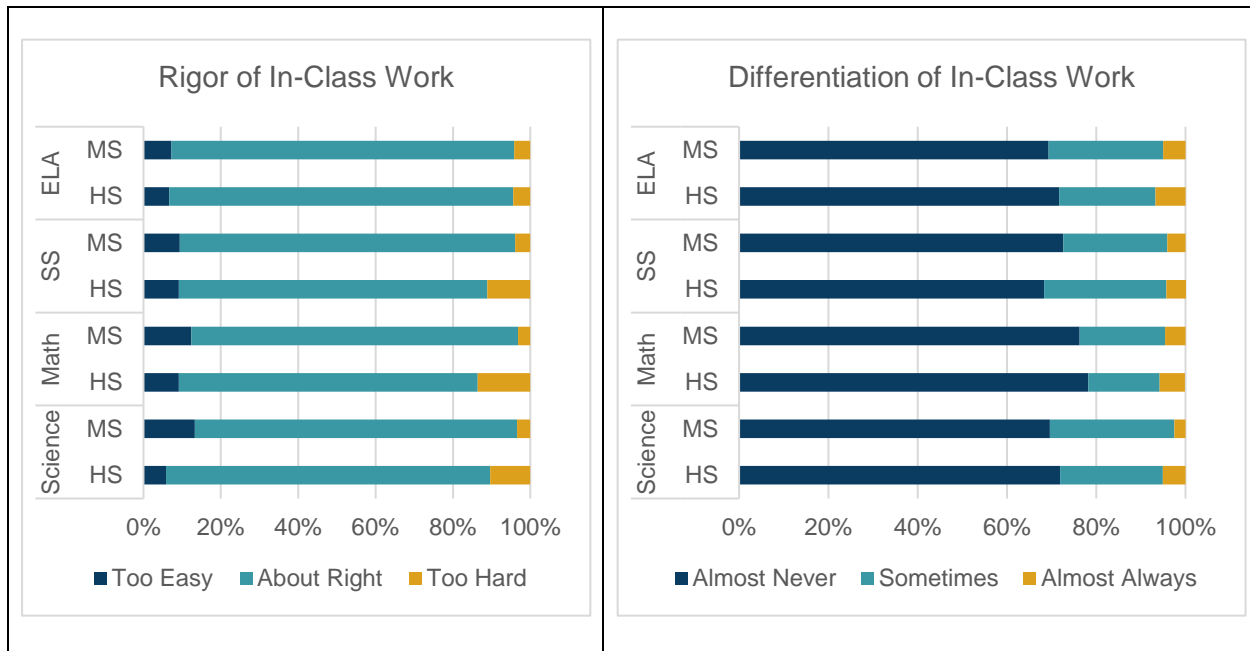
Figure 24. Perceptions of Advanced Courses (Secondary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Less than 22 percent of middle and high school GT students perceive that their GT courses expose them to different types of college and career opportunities.

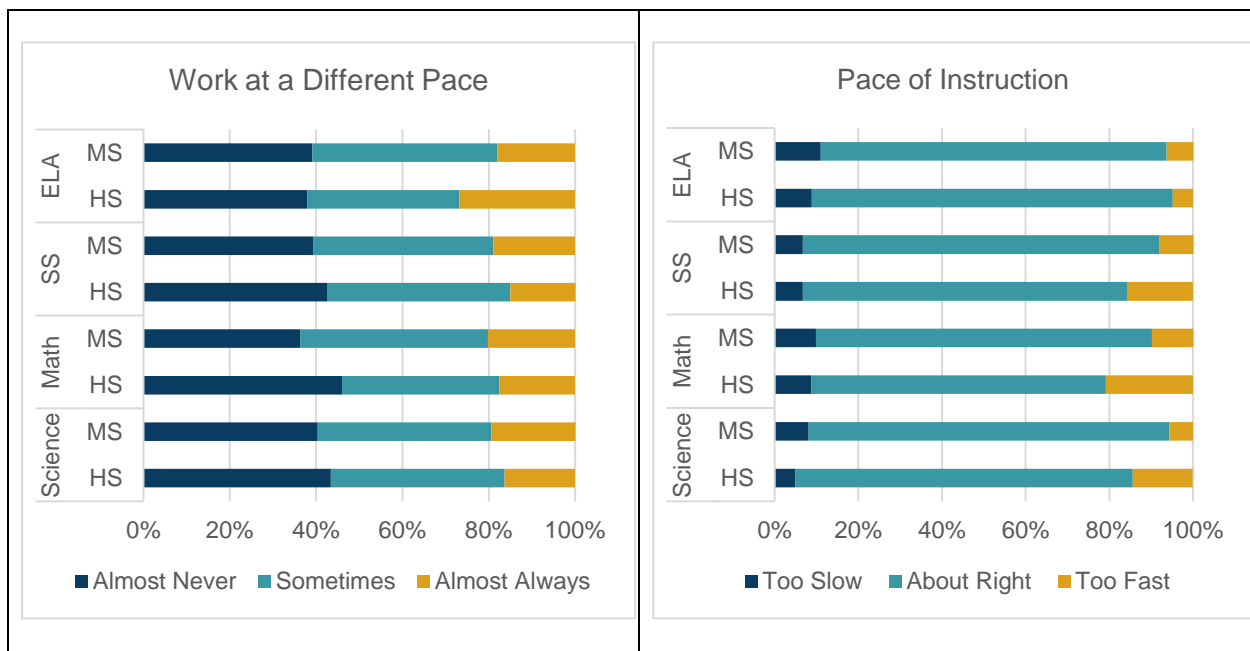
Instructional Rigor and Pace

As shown in Figure 25 below, the vast majority of GT students that responded to the survey indicated that the rigor of in-class work is “about right”; a higher percentage of high school GT students indicated that the rigor of in-class work in the subjects of Math, Science, and Social Studies is “too hard” compared to responses from middle school GT students. With respect to differentiation of in-class work, 72 percent of GT students perceive that in-class work is “almost never” differentiated for their unique learning abilities.

Figure 25. Perceptions of In-Class Work (Secondary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

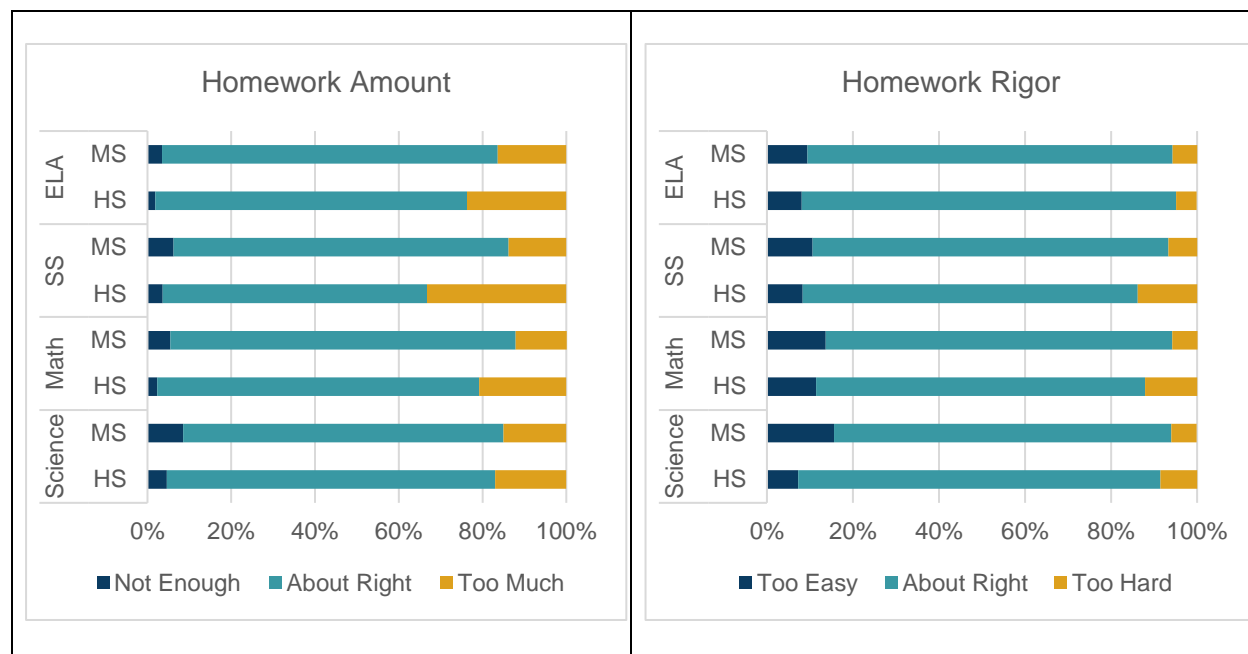
With regard to the pace of instruction, approximately 40 percent of all secondary GT students that responded to the survey reported that they “almost never” have the opportunity to work at a different pace than the rest of the class, while a small percentage of students indicated that the pace of instruction was either “too slow” or “too fast” (Figure 26). Responses were fairly even across middle and high schools and across content areas.

Figure 26. Perceptions of Instructional Pace (Secondary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Across all core content areas, more than 76 percent secondary GT students indicated that the amount of homework they have is “about right,” while almost 20 percent of GT students indicated that the amount of homework they have is “too much” (Figure 27). The vast majority (81.5%) of GT students perceive that the rigor of homework assignments is “just right” across all content areas.

Figure 27. Perceptions of Homework Assignments (Secondary)



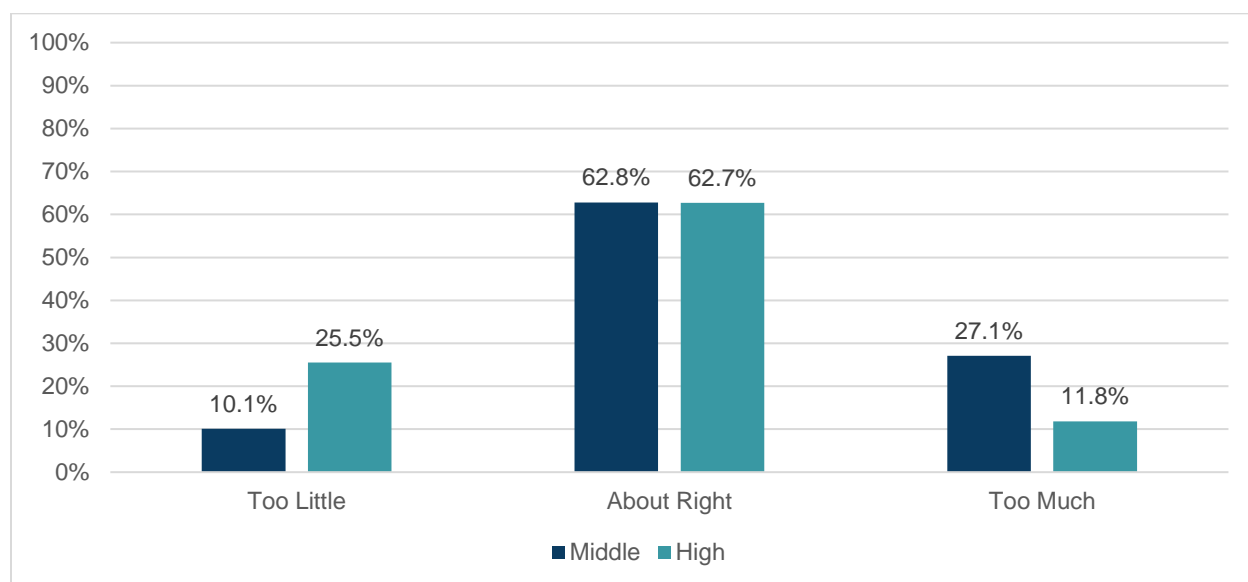
Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Texas Performance Standards Project

During the 2020-21 academic year, secondary students were not required to complete the TPSP (with the exception of students at QVMS). Almost 52 percent of middle school GT students and 66.5 percent of high school GT students that responded to the survey indicated that they completed the TPSP this past school year. Nearly eighty percent of all GT secondary students indicated that they were told that they had to complete the TPSP, while nearly 20 percent indicated that they were told that it was optional.

Nearly 18 percent of middle school GT students indicated that they were assigned their TPSP topic, while 82 percent of middle school students indicated that they selected their TPSP topic; 92 percent of high school GT students indicated that they selected their TPSP topic. Forty-four percent of middle school students and 56.8 percent of high school students indicated that they were “mostly/very interested” in their TPSP topic.

Overall, 86.8 percent of secondary GT students indicated that the level of difficulty in completing the TPSP this year was “about right,” and there was not a significant variation in responses from middle and high school students. With respect to the amount of time students spent working on the TPSP, 63.2 percent of students indicated that it was “about right,” while 23.2 percent indicated that they spent “too much” time and 13.7 percent of student indicated that they spent “too little” time on the TPSP (Figure 28).

Figure 28. Time on the TPSP (Secondary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

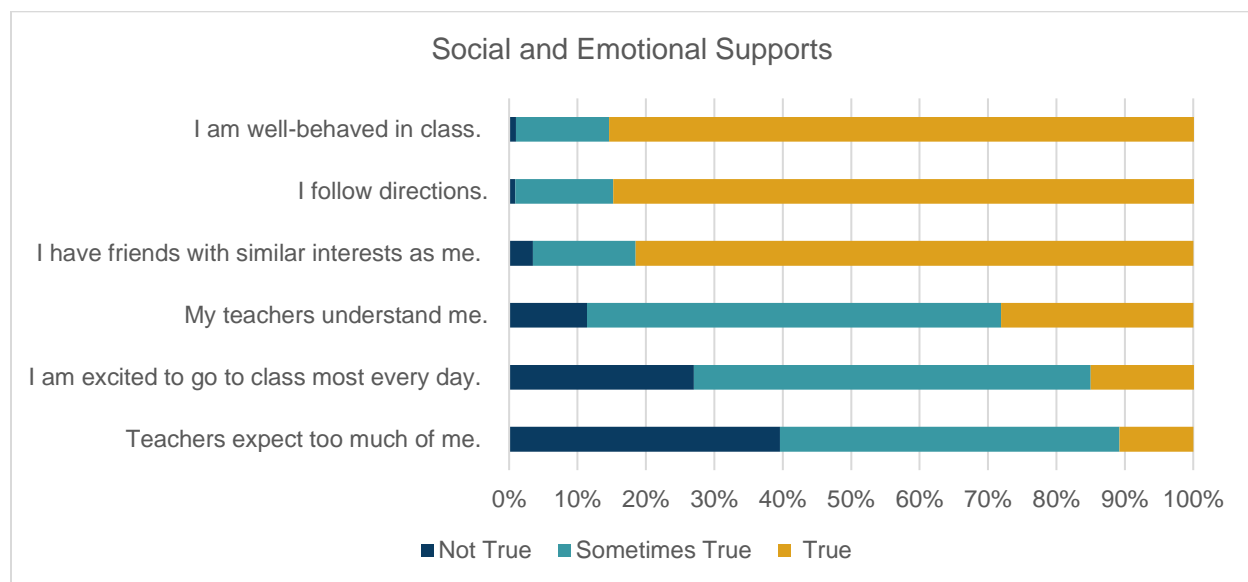
GT Mentorship Program

Of the 53 high school seniors that responded to the GT survey, 15.1 percent indicated that they participated in the GT Mentorship Program. Seventy-five percent of students that participated in the program would recommend it to other students; 12.5 percent of students would not recommend the program; and 12.5 percent of students indicated that they were not sure.

Of the 60 high school juniors that responded to the survey, 26.7 percent indicated that they applied to the GT Mentorship Program for their senior year. Of the 73.3 percent of juniors that did not apply, 40.9 percent indicated that they are familiar with the program; 27.3 percent indicated that they are somewhat familiar with the program; and 31.8 percent of students indicated that they are not at all familiar with the GT Mentorship Program. Nearly 71 percent of the 713 GT students in Grades 6 through 10 that responded to the survey indicated that they are not at all familiar with the GT Mentorship Program, while just 5.3 percent plan to apply.

Social and Emotional Supports

With one exception, secondary GT student responses to the GT survey closely mirrored those of elementary GT students with regard to their perceptions of social and emotional supports. Unlike elementary students, more than 60 percent of secondary GT students perceive that their teachers expect too much from them (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Perceptions of Social and Emotional Supports (Secondary)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Student Survey

Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations

Commendation 4: Program pilots are routinely used to implement and scale new GT program initiatives.

A pilot project is defined as an initial small-scale, short-term study conducted to evaluate feasibility, cost, duration, and improve upon the study design before executing a project at full scale. It is the goal of the GT Department in Fort Bend ISD to continue to develop research-based innovative programming to enhance and expand GT service options at the elementary and secondary level. The GT Implementation Team (formerly the GT Task Force) plans, manages, and oversees the implementation of various workstreams. As programming is developed, it is piloted at select grade levels and campuses in order to collect feedback and make needed adjustments prior to implementing the program districtwide. Below is a brief description of the initiatives currently being piloted:

- The **Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP)** is fully implemented at all elementary schools for GT students in Grades 1 through 5, as well as for students in Grades 6 through 8 at the GT Academy. While all GT students at secondary schools currently have the option of completing the TPSP, the Department plans to formally phase it in by grade level at all secondary schools over the next few years. This phased implementation allows the Department's Curriculum Integration Coordinator to facilitate, monitor, and evaluate the integration of TPSP within the K-12 content units and provide training and support to campuses.
- **Innovation Hour** is a student-driven inquiry process that encourages students to learn and create based on their passions. The program provides GT students the opportunity to explore a topic they are curious and/or passionate about while in a school setting. The program was initially piloted at select grade levels on nine campuses in 2020-21; a second cohort of seven campuses was added in 2021-22. The GT Department utilized feedback gathered from the first-year cohort to modify

teacher trainings for the second cohort. The Curriculum Integration Coordinator supports this initiative by providing training to teachers and administrators, observing classrooms, and facilitating information sharing and lessons learned through regular open lab sessions.

- A **Gifted and Talented Learning Plan (GTLP)** is a written record of gifted and talented programming utilized with each GT student in order to detail their individual needs and services. The essential components of the GTLP include student-specific goals and research-based strategies. The GTLP was initially implemented districtwide in 2019-20; however, there were significant challenges stemming from a lack of teacher and parent training. The initiative was rebranded under “GTLP Reimagined,” and then subsequently piloted at seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools during the 2020-21 school year; additional campuses were added to the pilot in 2021-22 (eight elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and one high school). The Department is continuing to determine if any additional changes are needed prior to districtwide implementation in August 2022.

Finding 13: Qualitative data suggests that the continuum of GT services is not being implemented with fidelity at all elementary campuses.

Fidelity of implementation refers to the degree to which delivery of an intervention adheres to the protocols and program model originally developed. Fidelity of implementation is especially critical when programs are being scaled up, as is the case with some of the GT initiatives in Fort Bend ISD.

The primary model for serving identified GT students at the elementary level is cluster grouping (i.e., a grouping assignment of five or six students within a heterogeneous classroom) with GT-trained teachers in the core subject areas of ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Campuses that have higher numbers of GT-identified students at a grade level are able to accommodate self-contained classes with GT and high-ability learners. Teachers then differentiate instruction for GT students and other high-ability learners through curricular compacting, lesson differentiation, and projects that are aligned to the TPSP. How effective classroom teachers are at implementing these practices and differentiating instruction, however, is mostly dependent on their individual skills and abilities, and the curricular resources available to them.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the audit team was unable to visit campuses and conduct classroom observations. School visits would have provided the audit team with an opportunity to observe first-hand the service delivery model and instructional practices of GT-trained teachers at different grade levels and across several campuses. However, qualitative data collected by the audit team through surveys and group interviews suggests that instruction is not consistently and appropriately being differentiated for all gifted learners:

- With the exception of the TPSP, nearly two-thirds of elementary GT students that responded to the survey indicated that they “almost never” have the opportunity to work on in-class assignments that are different than what the rest of their class is working on, and nearly half perceive that they are working at the same pace as the rest of their class. Disaggregated survey response data shows uneven response patterns to these questions across campuses.
- GT-trained elementary teachers that participated in group interviews commented that they “struggle to differentiate instruction” for their gifted learners and are unclear about “how far to push students

through the curriculum.” They also discussed particular challenges with differentiating instruction for students who are twice-exceptional. Teachers would like access to more curricular resources for their GT students (“I need to be able to give them something different, not just more work”). Teachers expressed a desire for more training, and that the training be “less theoretical and more practical; show us strategies and model them for us.” Positively, several elementary teachers indicated that they have the opportunity to collaborate in vertical teams with other GT-trained teachers for the specific purpose of discussing the TPSP, but this practice does not appear to be happening consistently across campuses.

- Elementary principals that participated in group interviews reported that, based on their own observations, teachers need more training on differentiation strategies for GT learners (“Outside of the TPSP, I don’t see anything different going on in classrooms for GT students”). Principals also noted that they too could benefit from more communications and more clarity from the GT Department about the specific expectations related to the service design and delivery model for GT students, and more support for monitoring whether or not the programs and services are being implemented with fidelity on their campus. A common rubric for GT has not been developed and principals noted that GT is simply a checkbox on the Campus Support Team (CST) rubric, and there is no meaningful feedback provided to them about quality of GT programming on their campus through this process.
- Feedback that was provided by many of the parents of elementary students that responded to the GT survey and/or participated in group interviews have the perception that their child has “a lot of extra work,” and are unclear whether or not classroom instruction is differentiated to meet their child’s individual learning needs. Parents that participated in group interviews commended the District for recent improvements to the TPSP; however, they also perceive that there is a wide variation across elementary campuses in terms of how well it is being implemented.

Recommendation 12: Improve the fidelity with which the GT programs and services are implemented at elementary schools through the provision of job-embedded professional development supports for teachers and improved monitoring protocols for campus administrators.

The overall quality of GT programming in Fort Bend ISD is dependent on the fidelity with which programs and services are being implemented. At the elementary level, the two primary levers that would improve implementation fidelity are ongoing and job-embedded professional development for teachers, and support and accountability structures for administrators. Specifically, the District should consider the following actions:

- Continue to develop GT-specific curricular resources to support teachers in their instructional practices. Developing curriculum content for GT has been an area of focus for the Department. The GT Curriculum Coordinator, in collaboration with the Department of Teaching and Learning, is in the process of developing curricular alternatives in Grades 1 through 5 in all four content areas. These are stored in *Schoology*, the District’s learning management system (LMS). The Curriculum Coordinator oversees writers for the curricular alternatives (one per unit for Math and ELA, and one per concept for Social Studies and Science). All GT-trained teachers, and particularly new teachers, will need training on accessing and using these curricular resources.

- Build the capacity of teachers through job-embedded professional development focused on differentiating curriculum and instruction in ways that specifically address the needs of gifted and high-ability learners. Given the level of oversight that teachers in cluster-grouped classrooms must have over different student groups, adequate training is essential in this framework.
- Develop a system of monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of professional development so that evidence exists to indicate that professional development has been successful (fidelity of implementation).
- Provide training to all campus principals – not just those designated as GT Administrators – as it is essential that they understand the core elements of the District's GT program (e.g., identification goals and outcomes, curriculum and instruction, student assessment). As part of this training, the Department must also communicate clear expectations for how the GT program and services are to be implemented. As recommended in *Chapter 2 – Department Organization, Staffing, and Program Management*, principals should also be held to account for the inclusion of GT in their CIPs.
- Provide campus administrators with protocols (i.e., rubrics) to assist them in routinely monitoring and gauging the fidelity of implementation of the GT service components at their campus.
- Collaborate with the Department of Teaching and Learning to modify the CST rubric to include GT-specific 'look-fors,' and incorporate feedback about GT programming into the CST process.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to improve the fidelity with which the GT program is implemented at elementary schools. The GT Department will continue to develop GT-specific curricular resources and enhance professional development support throughout 2022-23.*

Finding 14: A full continuum of GT programs and services is not yet implemented at the secondary level.

High-quality gifted programming should challenge students at all grade levels through a multi-dimensional teaching approach that consists of curricula and instruction that meets the unique needs of gifted learners. Differentiation, enrichment, and a flexible instructional pace allow appropriate learning opportunities for gifted students.

The continuum of GT services at the secondary level in Fort Bend ISD (excluding the GT Academy at QVMS) primarily consists of the requirement to enroll in AAC and AP courses in the academic areas for which students are identified. GT students also have the opportunity for acceleration through CBE, which is a State requirement. Despite AAC and AP classes being offered as gifted programming at secondary schools, they are not in and of themselves what most consider to be gifted programming. These advanced-level courses are open enrollment and are available to all students. The District does not currently offer any curricular alternatives for GT students at the secondary level. Although these courses are being taught by GT-trained teachers, 72 percent of secondary GT students that responded to the survey reported that their in-class work is “almost never” differentiated for their unique learning abilities, and almost 40 percent of students reported that they “almost never” have the opportunity to work at a different pace than the rest of the class.

Other opportunities available to secondary GT students in Fort Bend ISD are either very limited (e.g., the GT Mentorship Program is capped at 25 high school seniors) or considered optional (e.g., TPSP and after-school enrichment activities). Anecdotally, many of the eighth- and twelfth-grade GT students that participated in the group interviews indicated that, outside of the TPSP and GT Mentorship program, they did not feel that their learning path was any different from other high-ability students. One student commented, “Other than the [TPSP] project, I have never done anything different for GT.” There is a wide perception amongst all stakeholders that, with the exception of the GT Academy, the GT program “goes away” after elementary school.

Notably, the GT Department, through the work of the Implementation Team, is planning to expand secondary service options through the designation of GT-specific AP classes, development of an independent study course, and expansion of the GT Mentorship program. According to the Task Map, these initiatives are in the early planning stages, with pilot initiatives occurring in June 2020 (GT-specific classes), May 2023 (independent study courses), and August 2025 (expansion of GT Mentorship Program).

The State Plan allows for school districts to have the flexibility to service GT students based on district resources and needs. The continuum of services (service delivery models) typically includes a combination of pull-out, enrichment, acceleration, grouping, mentoring, service opportunities, and academic competitions. To provide context and inform recommendations resulting from this Audit, Gibson collected and reviewed publicly available information from each of the comparator district websites to better understand the GT service design and delivery models being implemented. All of the comparator districts included in their GT program handbooks or other literature service design descriptions related to differentiation of instruction through flexible pacing and curricular compacting, advanced level programming that includes pre-AP and AP courses, opportunities for acceleration through CBE or dual credit, and after-school enrichment opportunities. GT service options for all comparator districts are offered in the core content areas of ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies, unless otherwise noted. As such, the brief descriptions presented in Table 19 below highlight only the program design elements that appear to be distinctly different from what is offered in Fort Bend ISD. The key observations from this benchmarking assessment are:

- Katy ISD is the only comparator district to offer a mentorship program for high school seniors. Any student (not just GT) with a 3.8 GPA or higher is encouraged to apply. (Of note, student testimonials about the benefits of the program and to promote the program are posted on the District’s website.)
- Three of the comparator districts (Katy ISD, Spring Branch ISD, and Conroe ISD) provide services at the elementary level through a pull-out model for a fixed amount of time per week.
- Conroe ISD appears to have individually-developed structured learning path for GT students at the secondary level.
- One comparator district (North East ISD) offers gifted services in the area of performing arts.

Table 19. GT Service Design Models of Comparator Districts

Comparator District	GT Service Design Description
Katy ISD	<p>At the elementary level, identified students are served through the Challenge program, which is available at all elementary campuses. GT students in Grades 1 through 5 receive services one day per week through a pull-out model, while Kindergarten students participate in the Challenge program 60 minutes per week (beginning in March). Services are provided by an itinerant Challenge teacher, who is highly trained in the education of the gifted. The Challenge curriculum includes high-interest advanced content, creative and critical thinking skills, research and technology skills, and the opportunity to pursue topics of individual interest. Each year's curriculum units are connected by a broad-based theme.</p> <p>At the secondary level, students in Grades 6 through 12 are served through a Specific Subject Matter Aptitude model, where students are served in one or more of the four core content areas. AP and KAP (Katy Advanced Program) curricula are differentiated to meet the unique needs of gifted learners. AP/GT and KAP/GT courses are taught by GT-trained teachers. GT students must participate in the GT designated course or be exited from that content area.</p> <p>GT Independent Study electives are offered at participating campuses (Grades 7 and 8) and Online Virtual School (Grades 10 through 12) in which GT students will develop a product proposal, compile a portfolio, conduct in-depth research, and consult with a mentor from the business or professional community. High school seniors may participate in Professional Advancement through Career Education (PACE), which is a mentorship program in which students intern with adult professionals to acquire career knowledge and experience while still in high school.</p> <p>At all levels, GT students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of fee-based programs that take place on Saturdays and during the summer.</p>
Spring Branch ISD	<p>At the elementary level, GT students in Grades K through 2 receive services through a Primary Gifted Program (PGP) that takes place on their home campus. Students are provided services weekly, and instruction focuses on the development of independent research skills, developing products, and meeting the social-emotional needs of GT students. GT students in Grades 3 through 5 spend one day per week in a challenging program (Spiral) located at the Bendwood campus. The focus of the program is to increase reasoning and accelerate learning through the development of multiple intelligences, leadership characteristics, and higher-level thinking skills.</p> <p>At the secondary level, GT students may be grouped in GT-only classes, clustered in AAC/AP classes or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. The grouping varies by school, grade level, and subject area.</p> <p>At all levels, acceleration is offered in Math as a single subject or a whole grade can be skipped. The passing requirements are different depending if students have had prior instruction.</p>
Conroe ISD	<p>At the elementary level, GT services are provided by the classroom teacher through in-class flexible groupings, or by a GT pull-out (Challenge) teacher. The pull-out option is available to students in the Woodlands High School and Grand Oaks High School feeder zones.</p>

Comparator District	GT Service Design Description
	<p>At the intermediate level (Grades 5 and 6), students are served through differentiated curriculum in the core content areas, and advanced level programming is offered in Math only.</p> <p>At the junior high school level (Grades 7 and 8), students are encouraged to take advanced level classes (Pre-Advanced Honors Placement) in which their talents and interests lie.</p> <p>At the high school level (Grades 9 through 12), GT students take comprehensively structured and coherently sequenced four-year plans through individualized conferences with parents, counselors, and their high school teacher(s). High school learning paths include a full-range of advanced academics.</p> <p>At all levels, curriculum is modified based on annual evaluations and current research. Resources and planning time are provided for curriculum development for services in the GT program. Specialists in content areas, instructional techniques, and GT education work with curriculum planners as curriculum is being designed and developed.</p>
North East ISD	<p>At the elementary level, GT students in Grades K through 2 receive services through a pull-out service model once weekly. Program foci is on different types of thinking. GT students in Grades 3 through 5 also receive services through a pull-out service model once weekly, where learning is focused on systems thinking, masterpieces and mysteries of mankind, and eminent people and philosophy. Notably, the pull-out program is in the English content area only.</p> <p>At the secondary level, GT students may participate in one or more secondary programs: 1) GT Math with a Science emphasis; 2) GT English with a Social Studies emphasis and specific course of study; 3) North East School for the Arts (NESA), a performing arts high school; or 4) Interdisciplinary Studies electives at the high school level.</p>
Humble ISD	<p>At the elementary level, GT students are served in general education classrooms with a GT-trained teacher, as well as a pull-out teacher. Teachers collaborate to differentiate curriculum, instruction, and assessment for GT students.</p> <p>At the secondary level, GT students are served by GT-trained teachers through AP, Dual Credit/On Ramps, and IB coursework.</p> <p>At all levels, program literature states that “services can and do vary based on the campus.”</p>

Source: Comparator district websites

Recommendation 13: Provide GT students at the secondary level with a full continuum of services based on program goals.

The GT Department should continue the incremental process of expanding the continuum of services to GT students at the secondary level. Enhancements to the GT program should be driven by clearly-defined learning goals and measurable outcomes, which can then serve as a framework for evaluating the degree to which students are achieving those learning objectives. As with elementary schools, the fidelity with which GT service components are implemented at the secondary level is dependent on the capacity of educators, as well as the degree to which principals are supported and held accountable for the achievement and growth of GT students on their campus. As referenced in Chapter 2, principals should be

required to include metrics related to GT student performance and growth in their CIPs, and the GT Department should have the opportunity to regularly share information and communicate expectations to principals during principal PLC meetings.

Management Response: *Management agrees with this recommendation. These services are currently part of the GT five-year plan. To that end, in 2022-23, a new Independent Studies Class is planned to be piloted for GT students in grades 7 and 8. The GT Department will continue to investigate the piloting of GT-Specific AAC courses with the intention of building GT-Specific AAC and AP courses over subsequent years.*

Finding 15: GT programs and services do not explicitly address the affective development of GT students.

Fort Bend ISD is implicitly addressing the social and emotional needs of GT students at the elementary level through its current service design model (e.g., ensuring GT students have opportunities to work alongside their true peers as well as opportunities to work independently). Because GT students in Fort Bend ISD spend most of their time in the general education classroom, they also benefit from any school-wide programs and practices that support the social and emotional learning of all students. However, research has shown that profoundly gifted children experience their emotions and social development in a way that can significantly differ from neurotypical children, and many of gifted children need targeted assistance with peer relationships, perfectionism, asynchronous development (i.e., their growth – academically, emotionally, physically, or socially – is not uniform), situational stressors, and post-secondary planning.¹²

The GT Counselors indicated during group interviews that their primary role as it relates to the GT program is mostly limited to their participation in the student identification process (testing). Although some GT Counselors indicated that they sometimes host “lunch bunch” sessions with elementary GT students, this does not appear to be a universal practice of GT Counselors.

Responses to questions on the GT student and parent surveys related to the social and emotional supports students receive indicate that opportunities exist to better support students in this area. For example, just 59 percent of elementary GT students that responded to the survey indicated that there is at least one adult at school that they can talk to about their feelings (11% indicated that there is not, while 30% indicated that they were not sure), and just over half (54.8%) of elementary GT students perceive that their teacher(s) understands them. At the secondary level, 20 percent of GT students that responded to the survey do not feel that there is at least one adult at school that they can talk to about their feelings (28% were unsure), while only 28 percent perceive that their teachers understand them. Anecdotally, secondary GT students provided feedback during group interviews that they would like more support with stress and time management. Seventy percent of parents that responded to the survey, however, perceive that the District is meeting the social and emotional needs of their child.

¹² National Institute of Education. Retrieved from

<https://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/WebinarPowerPoints/The%20Social%20and%20Emotional%20Development%20of%20Gifted%20Children%20with%20Assessing%20Services.pdf>.

Recommendation 14: Enhance the District's program design model to better support the affective development of GT students.

The following implementation strategies should be considered to more explicitly support the social and emotional needs of GT students in Fort Bend ISD:

- Collaborate with the Department of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Comprehensive Health to ensure that SEL Progression of Practice programming and training address the specific needs of GT students. This strategy is identified on the Task Map with a projected completion date of September 2022.
- Provide a more systemic approach to guidance and counseling services for GT students, and expand the role of GT Counselors beyond testing in order to focus on differentiated guidance services to GT students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.
- Articulate a strategy for ensuring the social and emotional needs of GT students from culturally diverse backgrounds are recognized and addressed.
- Increase professional learning related to social-emotional support for gifted learners.
- Require GT Counselors to work collaboratively with GT-trained teachers in the classroom to address social and emotional needs and to strengthen the psychosocial skills of GT students.
- Conduct awareness sessions for all campus administrators and staff regarding the social and emotional needs of gifted students. This recommendation is in alignment with the recommendation from the previous chapter that is focused on recognizing giftedness and identifying students that show potential to perform at remarkably high levels.
- Continue to offer training and supports to parents of gifted students so that they can nurture the social and emotional development of their children at home, and be better advocates for them at school and beyond. Ensure that parents regularly receive information (in their home language) related to the social and emotional needs of their GT students.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to enhance the District's program design to better support the social and emotional needs of GT students. The GT Department has plans to collaborate with the Department of Social and Emotional Learning to address this need by EOY 2023-24.*

Chapter 5 – Family and Community Involvement

This Chapter provides an assessment of Fort Bend ISD's family and community involvement activities related to the District's GT program. It also presents the results of a survey that was administered to parents of GT students to better understand their perceptions of and satisfaction with the District's GT program as it relates to communications and quality of GT programming and services. The key themes that emerge from this Chapter are summarized below.

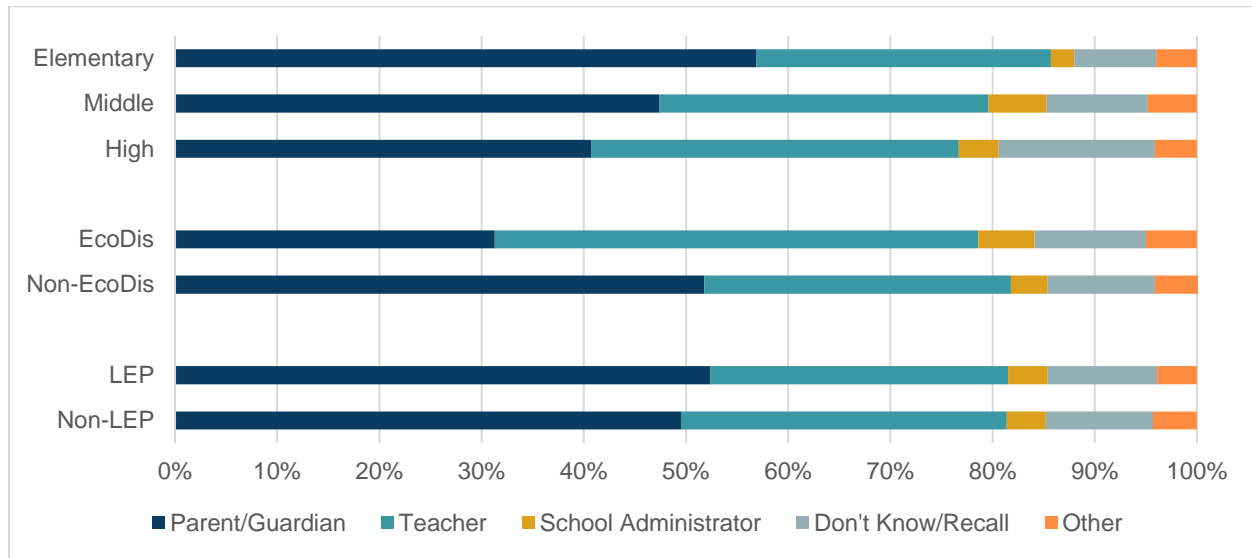
- The Department is commended for recent efforts to improve communications about the GT program, such as updating content on the District and campus websites, publishing monthly and quarterly newsletters, and social media. The Department is also commended for providing an array of opportunities to engage parents and community members in the GT program.
- In general, parents that responded to the GT survey and/or participated in group interviews indicated that they would like more information about the GT program and, more specifically, how their child is benefitting from being in the program. Only half of the parents that responded to the GT survey perceive that the GT program is meeting their child's academic needs, reaffirming the need to not only improve the program design and delivery model (discussed on *Chapter 4 – Program Design and Implementation*), but to also communicate more effectively with parents about the District's GT programs and services (including ongoing initiatives) and how their child's academic and affective needs are being met.

GT Parent Survey Results

Gibson administered a survey to all Fort Bend ISD parents of GT students to better understand their overall satisfaction with the GT programs and services their child receives. The survey asked parents to rate their experiences and perceptions about the student identification process, communications from both the District office and their child's campus about the GT program, and the quality of the GT program and services their child receives.

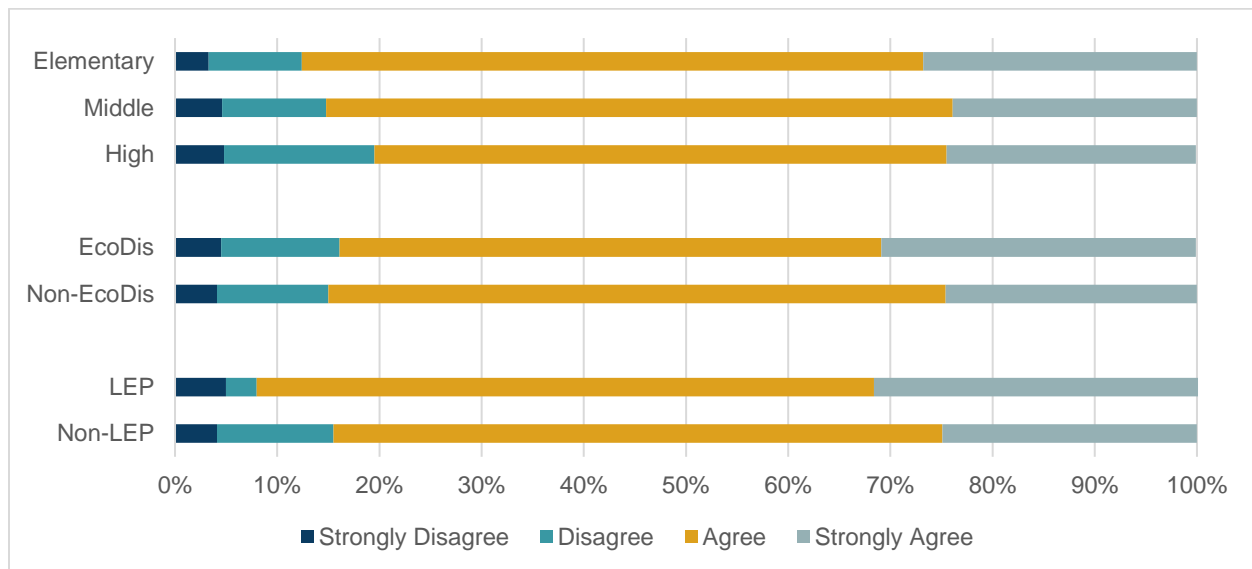
Student Identification

As described in *Chapter 3 – Student Identification*, the referral process in Fort Bend ISD allows parents, teachers, students, or other individuals to refer students who they believe may need gifted and talented services. Figure 30 shows that the majority of parents who responded to the survey indicated that they referred their child for GT screening if they have a gifted child in elementary school (56.9%), are not economically disadvantaged (51.8%), or are LEP (52.4%).

Figure 30. Source of Referral for GT Screening

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

More than 80 percent of all parents that responded to the survey indicated that they understand the criteria by which students qualify for GT services (Figure 31). Nearly 20 percent of parents of high school students disagreed with this sentiment.

Figure 31. Understanding of GT Qualification Criteria (Agreement)

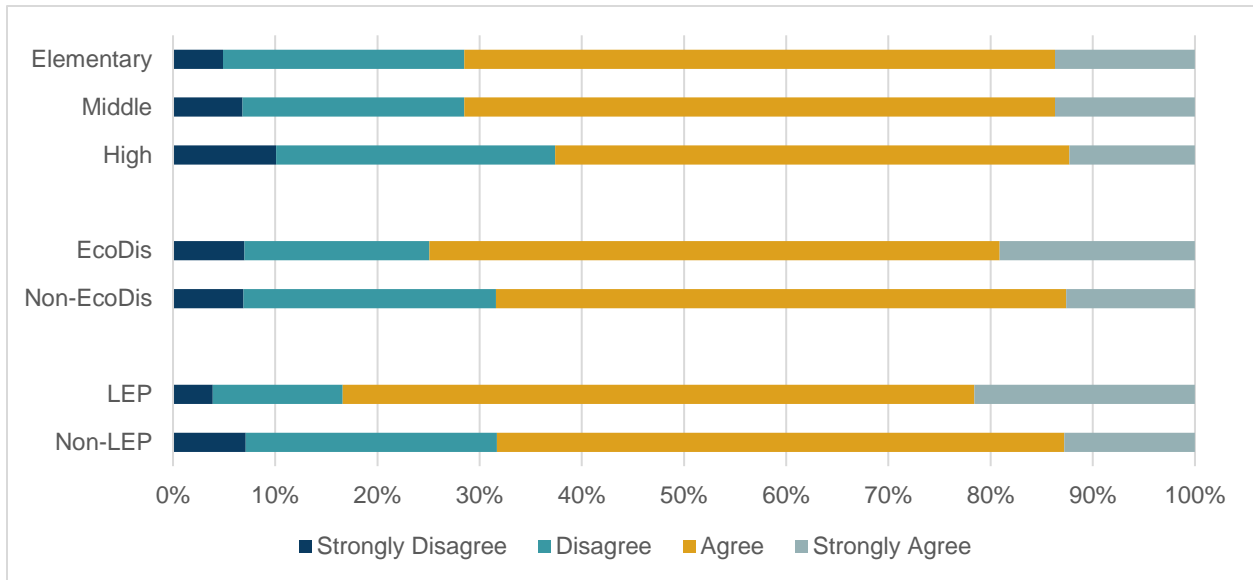
Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Program Communications

Parents were asked a series of questions on the survey relating to the communications they receive about GT programming in Fort Bend ISD. The vast majority of parents that responded to the survey agreed that

the District provides sufficient information about the needs of gifted children. Agreement rates were slightly lower for parents of high school students compared to parents of elementary and middle school students.

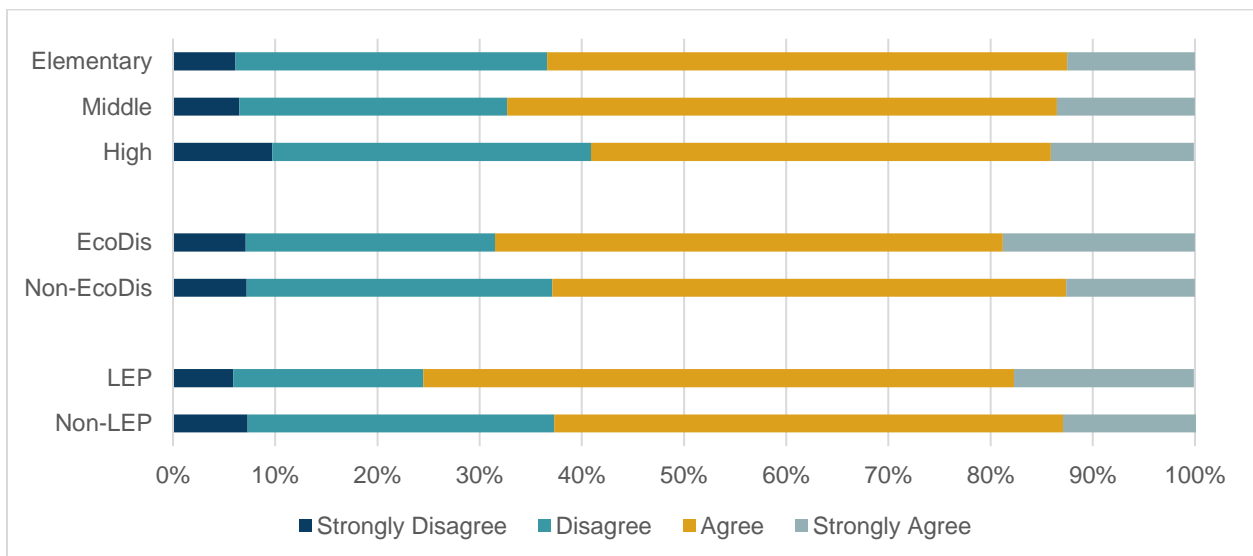
Figure 32. Fort Bend ISD Provides Information About the Needs of Gifted Children (Agreement)



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Nearly 37 percent of all parents that responded to the survey indicated that they are not provided with sufficient information about the GT program. This was truest for parents of high school students, parents of non-economically disadvantaged students, and parents of non-LEP students.

Figure 33. Parents Are Provided with Sufficient Information About the GT Program (Agreement)

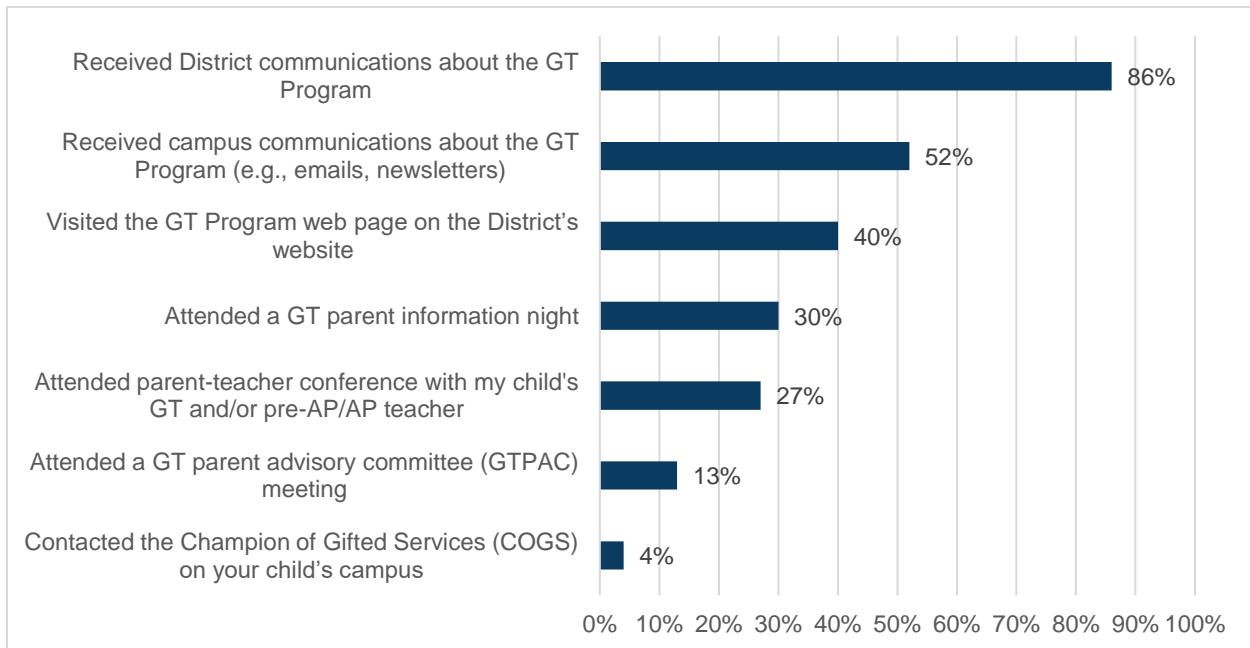


Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Fort Bend ISD communicates to parents about the GT program in a variety of ways. More than 86 percent of parents that responded to the survey indicated that they received communications from the GT

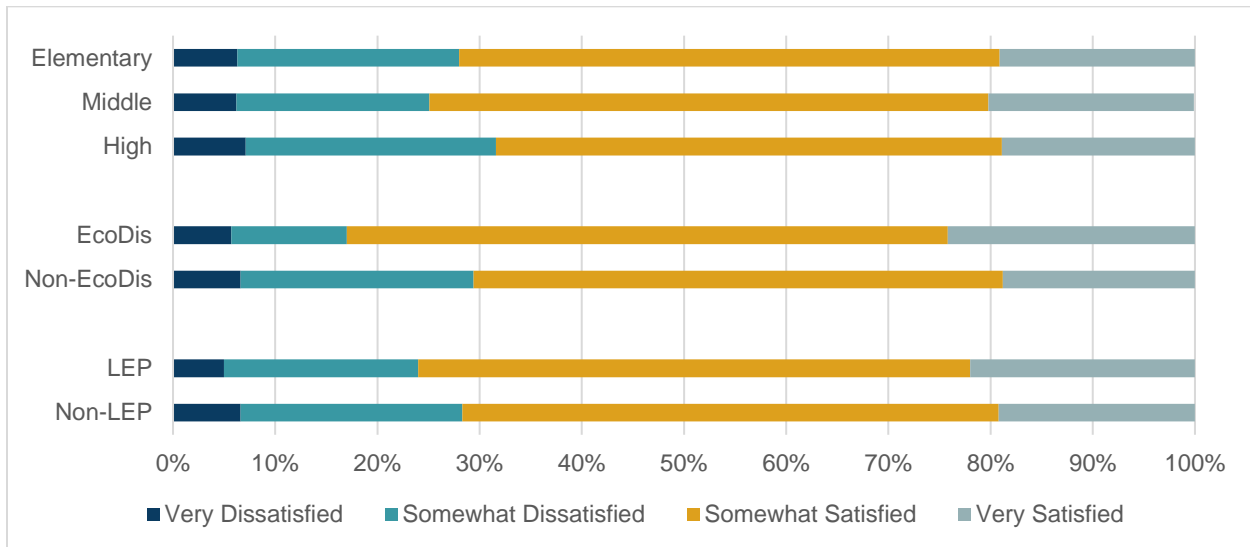
Department this past school year, while just over half (52%) of parents indicated that they received communications about the program from their child's campus. Parents indicated that they are somewhat less likely to actively seek out information about the GT program, with 40 percent of parents indicating that they visited the GT Department's webpage. Thirty percent of parents indicated that they attended a GT parent information night and just 13 percent indicated that they attended a GT PAC meeting (either in person or remote). Twenty-seven percent of parents indicated that they attended a parent-teacher conference with their child's GT teacher, while just four percent indicated that they contacted the COGS on their child's campus.

Figure 34. Communications Received or Accessed this School Year



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

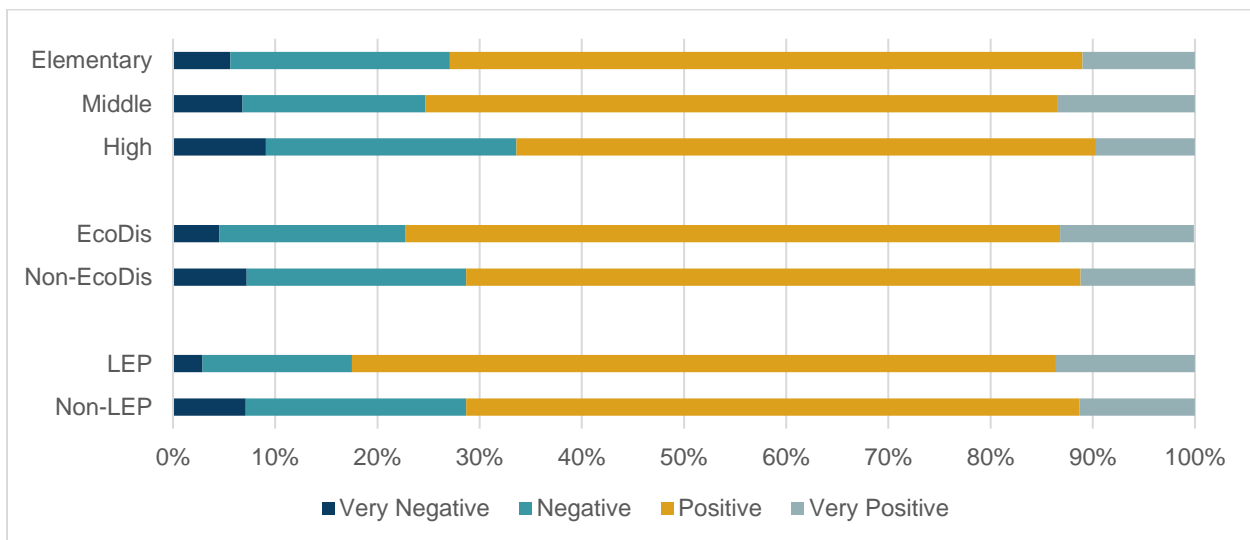
Overall, 72 percent of parents that responded to the survey indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the communications they receive about the GT program. Parents of high school students tended to be less satisfied with the communications they receive than parents of middle school or elementary school students (Figure 35).

Figure 35. Satisfaction with the Communications About the GT Program

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

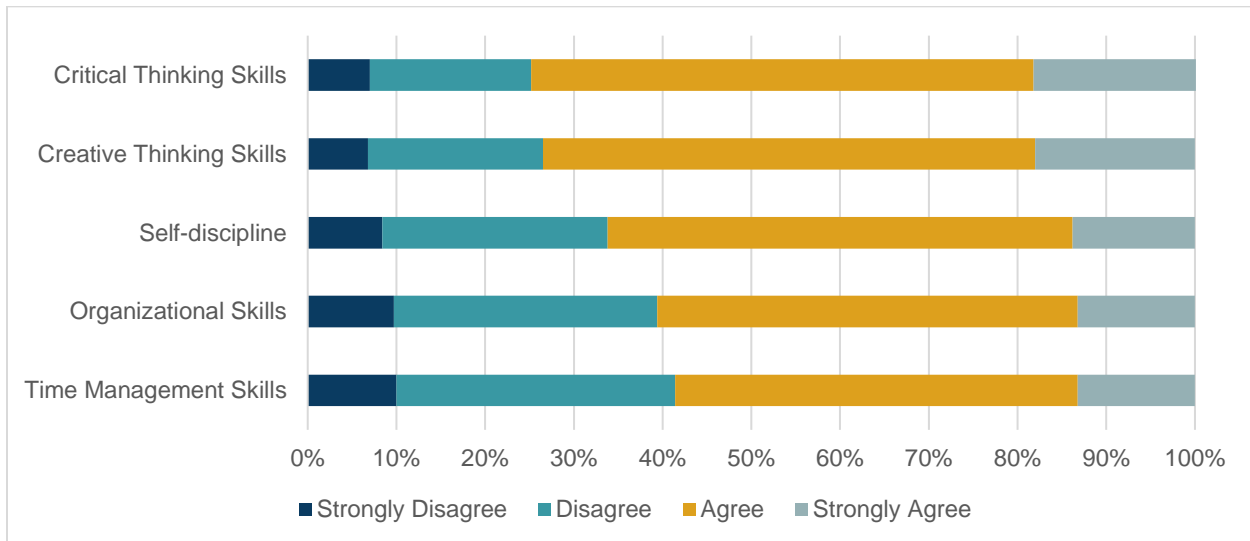
Program Quality

Seventy-two percent of parents described their perceptions of the overall quality of the GT program at their child's grade level as positive or very positive. Perceptions were less positive for parents of high school students, non-economically disadvantaged students, and non-LEP students.

Figure 36. Overall Perception of the Quality of the GT Program at Child's Grade Level

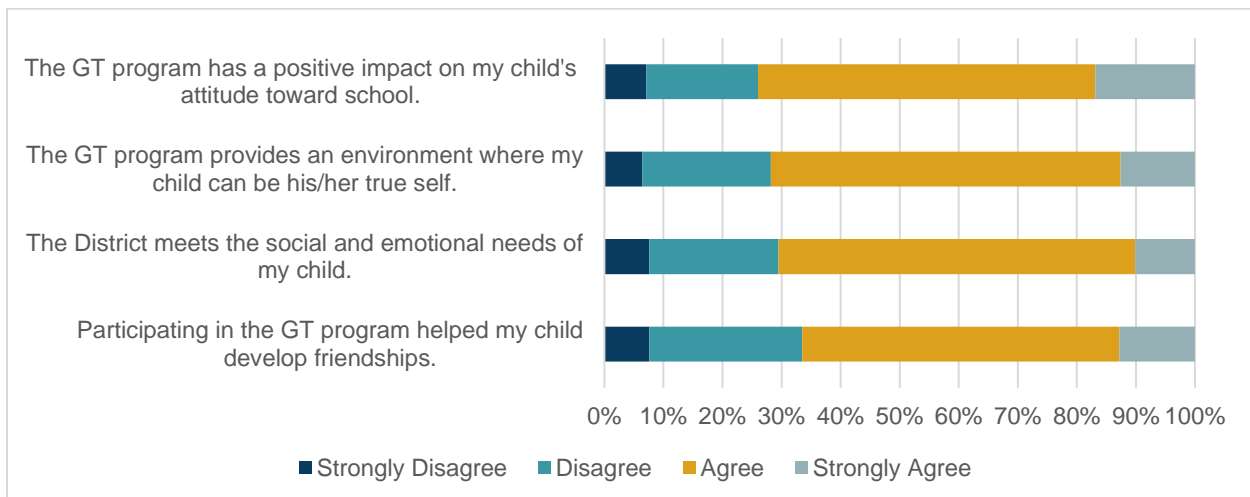
Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Nearly 75 percent of parents that responded to the survey perceive that the GT program helps their child develop critical thinking and creative thinking skills. Rates of agreement were lower with respect to self-discipline (66.2%), organizational skills (60.6%), and time management skills (58.6%).

Figure 37. Skill Development (Agreement)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

With regard to the social and emotional well-being of their child, 74 percent of parents that responded to the survey perceive that the GT program has a positive impact on their child's attitude toward school. Seventy percent of parents indicated that the social and emotional needs of their GT child are being met, while two-thirds of parents perceive that the GT program has helped their child develop friendships. More than 80 percent of parents agreed that their child benefits from being with other students of similar abilities and interests.

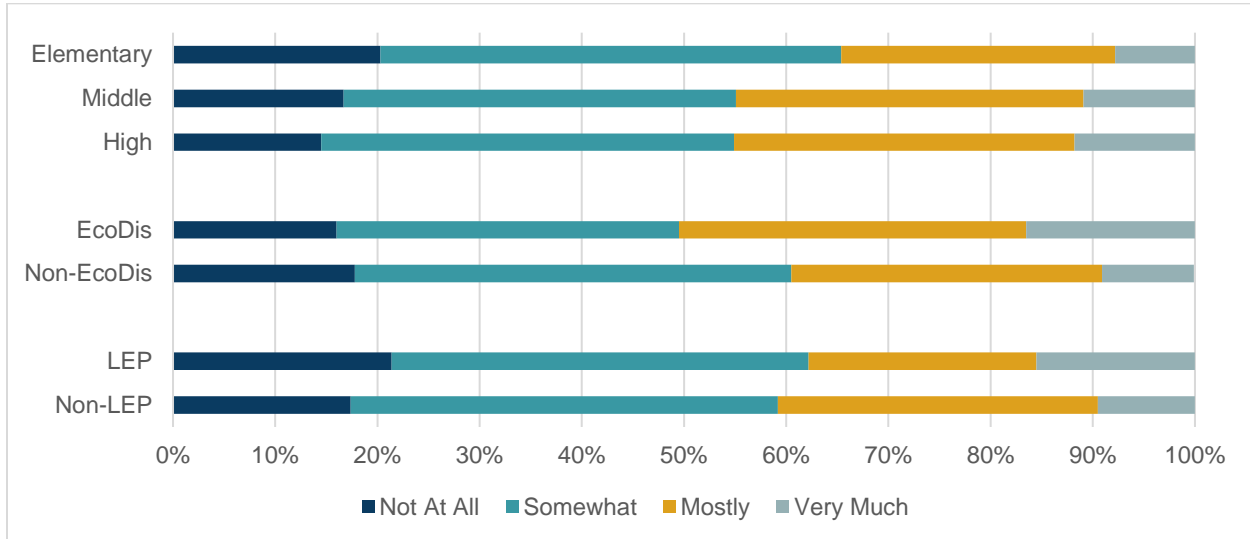
Figure 38. Social and Emotional Learning (Agreement)

Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Just over half (51.8%) of all parents that responded to the survey indicated that they are informed about what is happening in their child's GT and/or advanced classes. This percentage is slightly higher for parents of a child in middle school (56.3%) and lower for parents of a child in high school (48.2%).

Nearly 60 percent of parents that responded to the survey perceive that their child is not at all academically challenged or only somewhat academically challenged in the content area(s) for which they have been identified as GT (Figure 39).

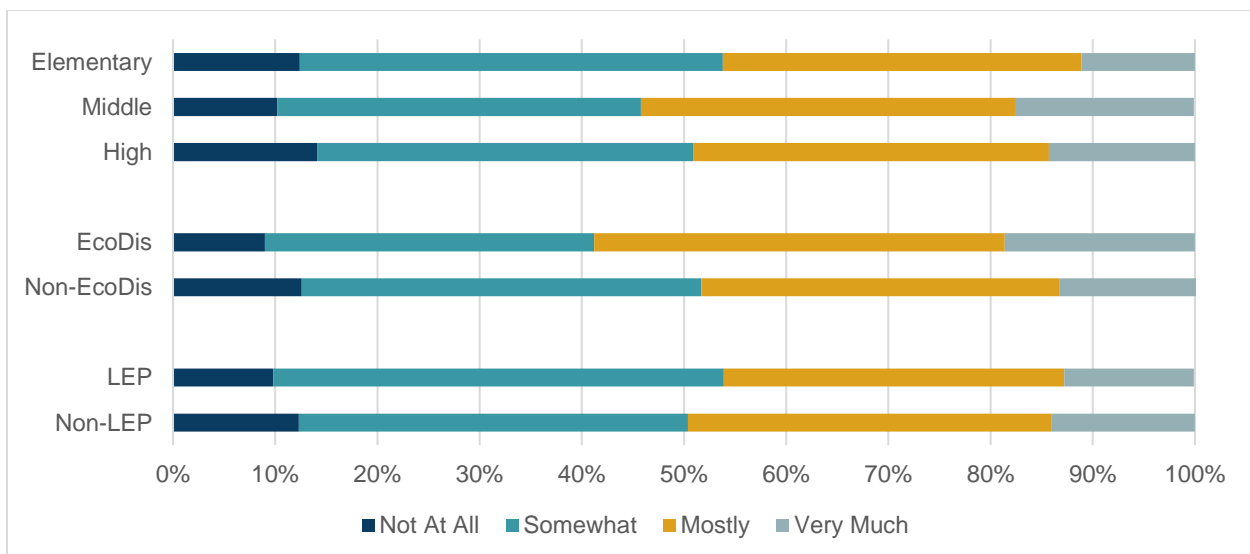
Figure 39. Academically Challenged in Identified Content Areas



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Overall, 73.3 percent of parents that responded to the survey indicated that their child is prepared for the academic coursework in the GT program, while just under half (49.4%) of parents perceive that the GT program is not at all or only somewhat meeting the academic needs of their child.

Figure 40. GT Program is Meeting Child Academic Needs



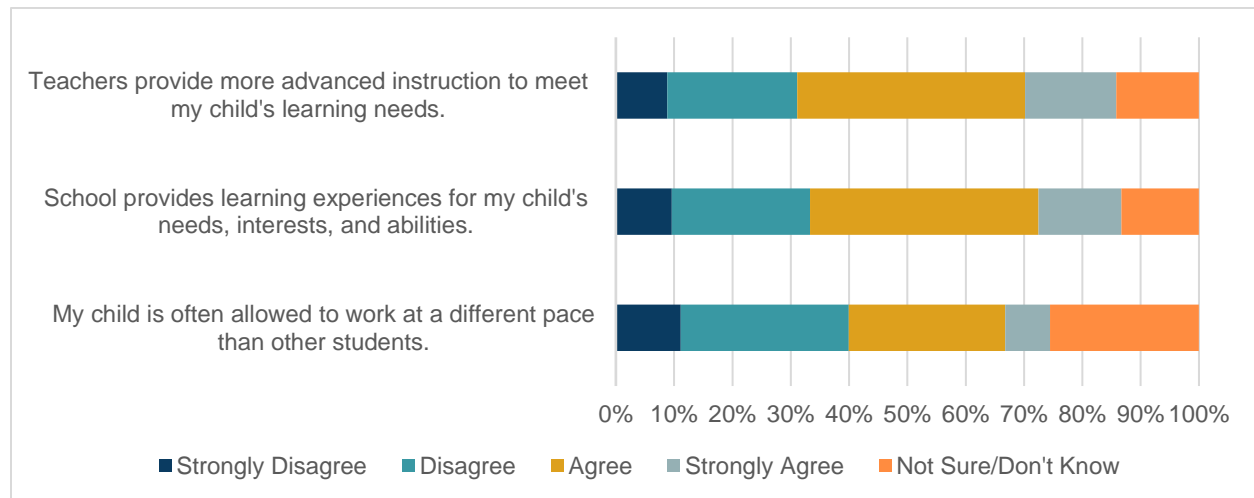
Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Nearly 26 percent of parents perceive that the academic rigor of homework assignments is too easy, while just 2.5 percent of parents perceive that homework assignments are too hard. Nearly 32 percent of parents

do not perceive that the work their child completes in class is at the right level of difficulty. Parent responses were similar across grade levels and demographics.

When asked about their perceptions of GT services, 54.7 percent of parents perceive teachers provide more advanced instruction, and nearly the same percentage of parents perceive that their child's school provides learning experiences to meet their child's unique needs, interests, and abilities. Parents were less clear on whether or not their child is allowed to work at a different pace than other students in their class (25.5 percent indicated that they are not sure), with nearly 40 percent of parents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement (Figure X).

Figure 41. GT Service Delivery



Source: Gibson Consulting Group GT Parent Survey

Commendations, Findings, and Recommendations

Commendation 5: The Department has implemented many initiatives aimed at improving communications between the GT Department, campuses, families, and students.

Through the work of the Communications Subcommittee of the GT Implementation Team (formerly the GT Task Force), the GT Department has identified and implemented several important initiatives to improve communications to key stakeholders about GT programming. These include:

- Department website** – The GT Department webpage on the District's website has been updated to be more informative and to provide more resources for parents. The Department webpage includes program documentation such as relevant Board policies, standard operating procedures, and the State Plan, and other program-specific information; informational videos, such as GT student referral and identification information, as well as districtwide Q&A sessions; video recordings of GT PAC meetings; GT Symposium sessions; and, links to other GT resources.
- Campus webpages** – In collaboration with the Information Technology Department, campus webpages have been updated to include a GT section under the Students and Parent tab that contains current District events and announcements (this content is controlled by the GT

Department), as well as campus happenings related to GT programming and evaluation (this content is maintained by the COGS).

- **Social media** – The GT Department is leveraging social media to communicate and engage with GT students and families. The Department of Gifted and Talented *Twitter* account (@fbisdgt) was established in June 2019 and currently has 350 followers. The GT Department also posts videos on its *YouTube* account.
- **Quarterly reports and monthly newsletters** – Beginning in Spring 2020, the Department began issuing quarterly reports that highlight the progress of the GT Task Force (Implementation Team) subcommittees, GT PAC news, status updates on the Five-Year Plan, and any policy and/or procedure updates. The GT newsletter, *Celebrating Gifted*, was recently revamped to include articles of interest for both parents and students, age-appropriate resources, news related to districtwide GT events, as well as student/class spotlights highlighting how new GT policies, procedures, and/or programs are being implemented on the District's campuses. Both publications are emailed to GT families as well as archived on the Department's webpage.
- **Parent Guide for Pilot Programs** – For each pilot initiative, parent guides are developed in both English and Spanish and sent to parents two weeks prior to implementation of a GT pilot initiative. These guides are also posted on the Department's webpage.
- **Guidance During COVID-19 Pandemic** – The Department developed a GT handbook for document procedures and protocols for the 2020-21 school year. The programming addresses the standards in the State Plan while providing services within the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on traditional instruction and programming models.

Commendation 6: The Department provides an array of opportunities to involve families and community members in the GT program.

Parents play a vital role in cultivating the growth and development of their gifted children. The State Plan requires that districts involve families and community members in services designed for gifted and talented students throughout the school year. As such, the GT Department provides an array of opportunities to involve families and community members in the GT program:

- The **GT Family Challenge Series** was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to provide families of GT students with the opportunity to participate in monthly virtual themed challenges designed to spark creativity and build critical thinking skills. Students, along with their families, create a hands-on product or performance based on an area of interest. Upon completion, students send a video presentation of their product or performance to the GT Department, who then shares it via the District's *YouTube* social media account.
- The **GT Parent Symposium** is an annual event that provides parents of GT students with the opportunity to attend a series of training sessions on a variety of GT-related topics. Many of the training sessions are offered "by parents for parents" so that parents can share their experiences and perspective raising GT child(ren). Video recordings and PowerPoint handouts of each session are available on the District's website.

- The **GT Showcases** take place every Spring and give GT students the opportunity to share the details of their TPSP project both at the campus and district-level with parents, District and school staff, and community members. Prior to the pandemic, the GT Showcase was a one-day event; it is currently offered virtually via *YouTube*.
- The **GT Mentorship Program** relies on business partners in the local community to provide mentorship opportunities for high school seniors participating in the program. Expanding this program, an initiative identified on the Task Map, will further increase the number of business partnerships within the community.

Finding 16: Although Fort Bend ISD meets the State Plan exemplary standard (6.4.1) of establishing a GT Parent Advisory Committee (GT PAC), 39 percent of campuses do not have a parent representative on the GT PAC.

The State Plan accountability standard 6.4 requires that district's provide parents and community members the opportunity to participate in a parent association and/or gifted and talented advocacy groups. The exemplary standard 6.4.1 states that support and assistance is provided to the district in gifted/talented service planning and improvement by a parent/community advisory committee.

The Fort Bend ISD GT Parent Advisory Committee (GT PAC) was established in June 2018 as a newly formed extension of the GT Department. According to the bylaws, the purpose of the PAC is to provide insight, support, and encouragement to the GT Department and the Fort Bend ISD gifted and talented community in order to facilitate the continuous improvement and success of the District's GT program. GT PAC members are comprised of parent representatives from each campus who serve as liaisons between their school community and the GT PAC. Members are invited to attend monthly meetings where they can receive program updates, ask questions, or provide feedback related to GT programming from their school communities. Commendably, the Department strives for cross-representation between members of the GT PAC and the Task Force (now Implementation Team) to ensure alignment of activities and that efforts are not duplicated. Video recordings of GT PAC meetings are published on the Department's webpage on the District's website.

The Department strives to have at least one member (up to three members are permitted) per campus on the GT PAC. However, the published list of 2021-22 GT PAC members on the District's website shows that nine of the District's 78 campuses have reached the maximum amount (three) of parent representatives this school year, while 18 (35%) elementary campuses, nine (60%) middle school campuses, and four (36%) high school campuses do not have any GT PAC representatives. The Department strives to increase parent representation from these campuses and is currently addressing this challenge by posting notifications on the Department website and in the GT newsletters.

Feedback from stakeholders during group interviews suggests that there is not a formalized process for COGS to communicate with members of the GT PAC. Establishing a formal line of communication between these positions will help to bridge communications between the GT Department, school, and home.

Recommendation 15: Engage campus administrators and staff in GT PAC recruitment efforts.

There is no simple solution to the persistent challenge of increasing parent engagement, particularly at Title I campuses and at the secondary level. Increasing parental engagement at these campuses must address common barriers that mostly relate to the flow of communications between the school and home. Some examples of barriers to effective communications include the lack of technology (e.g., not all parents can access email or campus websites); home language (e.g., parent communications are often only provided in English and Spanish despite more than 100 different languages and dialects spoken in Fort Bend ISD); and, information overload (e.g., parents often receive information from multiple sources on a variety of topics).

Efforts to reach parents of GT students to recruit them to volunteer on the GT PAC are likely to be more effective coming from campus administrators and staff rather than from the central office. Presumably school staff have already fostered strong connections between school and home. The GT Department, through the GT Administrators and COGS, should facilitate and support campuses in strengthening the lines of communications about the GT program and in their GT PAC recruitment efforts through content development and messaging. Meanwhile, the GT Department should allow any parent on a campus to participate on the GT PAC (in lieu of having no parent representative). At the elementary level, parents of students in the Vistas Talent Pool program should be actively recruited to serve on the GT PAC.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the need to engage administrators and staff in GT Parent Advisory Committee recruitment efforts. The GT Department has worked with campus Champions of Gifted Services (COGS), helping them build relationships with the parents of GT students on their campus. This effort will continue in 2022-23. In addition, a year-long GT PAC communication plan was developed in December that actively involves campus stakeholders in GT PAC recruitment efforts through the school year.*

Finding 17: Unfavorable perceptions of parents about the District's GT programs and services are rooted in a deficient program design and delivery model and insufficient communications, particularly at the secondary level.

Parents of GT students that provided feedback to the audit team about the District's GT program, either through the parent survey or during group interviews, highlighted several areas of concern related to the quality of the GT program and/or the perceived benefits their child(ren) receive from participating in it.

Overall, parents of GT students at the secondary level are less satisfied with the GT program than parents at the elementary level. There is a wide perception amongst parents that the GT program “stops” after elementary school. While the District is in the process of piloting several initiatives to expand and/or enhance GT programs and services, this perception by parents is not unfounded. As described in *Chapter 4 – Program Design and Delivery*, GT students at the secondary level are primarily served through open enrollment AAC and AP classes (with the exception of the GT Academy). Perhaps the most notable statistic from the parent survey is that less than half (49.4%) of all parents that responded to the survey perceive that the GT program is meeting the academic needs of their child (see Figure X). Anecdotally, parents shared in group interviews that they are frustrated because they perceive that their child is not being appropriately challenged academically, is spending too much time on “busy work,” and/or is generally working on-level with the rest of their class.

Parents also expressed a need for more communications about the GT program, and more specifically, how their child is progressing within the program. Parents indicated that they are more satisfied with the communications that originate from the central office than they are with the communications they receive about the GT program from their campus. Parents that participated in group interviews were aware of the Department's efforts to implement individual GTLP, but perceived that the goals that were established were "very generic and not specific to the needs of [my child]." Parents also expressed a desire to be able to communicate with other parents of GT children at their school (for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of their child). Parents said that they do not know what other students in the school are identified as GT, making it difficult to connect with their families.

Recommendation 16: Improve communications with parents of GT students through districtwide implementation of the GTLPs.

Ensuring parents are well-informed and satisfied with the academic learning and social and emotional supports their child receives from participating in the District's GT program should be viewed as a long-term and ongoing initiative. Many of the initiatives already identified in the Task Plan are aimed at improving the continuum of services for GT students, which will go a long way toward increasing parents' perceptions of and satisfaction with the GT program. Districtwide implementation of the GTLPs for every identified GT student, however, will not only help to align GT programming and services to the individual needs of each student, but it will also engage parents by having them collaborate with their child to develop both academic and affective goals, monitor their child's progress toward meeting those goals, and communicate with teachers each semester about their child. The GTLPs are currently being piloted at 15 elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools.

Management Response: *District-wide implementation is on schedule for the 2022-23 school year for grades 1-5. In Secondary, pilot campuses will continue implementing the GTLP at all grade levels. Non-pilot secondary campuses will implement GTLPs in 6th and 9th grade and expand their implementation to the next grade level so in the next four years all secondary students will have GTLPs. Full implementation will be complete by 2025-26.*

Appendix A – Interview Roster

Interviews

The audit team conducted interviews with the following Fort Bend ISD staff:

- Beth Martinez, Chief Academic Officer
- Dr. Deena Hill, Executive Director of Student Support Services
- Dr. Laurie Westphal, Director of Gifted and Talented
- Crystal Wilson, Elementary GT Program Manager
- Aisha Holmes, Secondary GT Program Manager
- Dr. Joseph Cahill, Curriculum Integration Coordinator
- Kamilah Holmes, GT Academy Coordinator
- Nancy Bryant, GT Mentorship Specialist
- Dr. Jeffery Post, Principal GT Academy at Quail Valley Middle School

Focus Groups

The audit team conducted focus groups with the following stakeholders:

- Elementary School Principals
- Secondary School Principals
- Elementary GT Teachers
- Secondary GT Teachers
- Parents of Elementary GT Students
- Parents of Secondary GT Students
- Champions of Gifted Services (COGS)/GT Liaisons
- GT Administrators
- GT Counselors
- Elementary GT Students
- Middle School GT Students
- High School GT Students

Appendix B – Elementary GT Student Survey

FBISD Student Survey - Elementary

We would like to hear about your experiences at your school. Please read each of the questions below carefully. There are no wrong answers. Your answers are private - even your teachers won't see them. If there are any questions you don't want to answer, you don't have to! Just skip them!

Please take your time and answer each question honestly. We appreciate your input!

Click the “Next” button to participate

Pick your school from the list below:

▼ Anne McCormick Sullivan Elementary School (1) ... Walter Moses Burton Elementary School (51)

What grade are you in?

- 3rd Grade
- 4th Grade
- 5th Grade

Enter your student ID number:

This year did you go to school:

- Mostly in-person
- Mostly online (from your house or from somewhere else on Teams)
- A little bit of both (some in-school, some from home on Teams)

We are now going to ask you a set of 6 questions - once for your English Language Arts (ELA) class, once about your math class, once about your science class, and once about your social studies class. Please think about that class specifically when you are answering questions.

English Language Arts (ELA)

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work on a different schedule (or at a different pace) than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

My teacher teaches:

- Too slow
- At about the right speed
- Too fast

Math

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work on a different schedule (or at a different pace) than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

My teacher teaches:

- Too slow
- At about the right speed
- Too fast

Science

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work on a different schedule (or at a different pace) than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

My teacher teaches:

- Too slow
- At about the right speed
- Too fast

Social Studies

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work on a different schedule (or at a different pace) than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

My teacher teaches:

- Too slow
- At about the right speed
- Too fast

On a regular day at school, how often are the following things true?

	Almost never	Sometimes	Almost always
My teacher teaches the whole class together as one big group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do school work in small groups with other students who are in the same grade as me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do school work in small groups with other students who are in a different grade than me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do school work on my own (independently).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get to choose what I'm studying or working on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get to do research on topics that interest me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teacher asks me what I want to learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Did you complete a Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) project this year (also known as a GT project)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

IF YES

Which of the following is more true? (pick one)

- My teacher said **I had to do** a TPSP project this year
- My teacher said **I could choose whether or not to do** a TPSP project this year

Where did you do most of the work for your TPSP project?

- During class
- Outside of class
- Equally during class and outside of class

Which of the following is more true?

- My teacher told me what my TPSP topic would be (or picked my TPSP topic for me)
- My teacher let me pick my TPSP topic

How interested were you in the topic of your TPSP project?

- Not interested
- A little interested
- Very interested

Completing your TPSP project this year was:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of time you spent working on your TPSP project this year was

- Too little
- About right
- Too much

Is there at least one adult at school who you can talk to about your feelings?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

How much are the following true for you?

	Not true for me	Sometimes true/Sometimes not true	True for me
My teachers understand me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have friends with similar interests as me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers expect too much of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am well-behaved in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow directions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am excited to go to class most every day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix C – Secondary GT Student Survey

FBISD Student Survey - Secondary

We would like to hear your feedback on some of your school experiences related to taking advanced courses. Your answers are confidential - no one will see them except for the research team collecting the data. We will summarize responses and report back to the school district to help guide school and program improvements.

There are no wrong answers. If there are any questions you don't want to answer, you don't have to! Just skip them! Please take your time and answer each question honestly. We appreciate your input! **Click the “Next” button to participate**

Which school do you attend? _____

What grade are you in?

- 6th Grade
- 7th Grade
- 8th Grade
- 9th Grade
- 10th Grade
- 11th Grade
- 12th Grade

Enter your student ID number: _____

This year did you go to school:

- Mostly in-person
- Mostly online (from your house or from somewhere else on Teams)
- A little bit of both (some in-school, some from home on Teams)

In which of the following subject areas are you taking advanced courses (including pre-AP, AP or other advanced courses that require permission or pre-requisites)?

	Yes	No
English Language Arts/Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Math	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Science	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Studies/Civics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Skip To: End of Block If In which of the following subject areas are you taking advanced courses (including pre-AP, AP or... [No] (Count) = 4

To what extent do you enjoy learning in your advanced courses?

- Not at all (1)
- Very little (2)
- Somewhat (3)
- Mostly (4)
- Very much (5)

To what extent do your advanced courses help you develop:

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Mostly	Very Much
Organizational skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time management skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Critical thinking skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Creative thinking skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-discipline	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you learn to present information in the following formats in your advanced courses?

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Mostl	Very Much
Written	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Oral	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology-based formats	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do your advanced courses expose you to?

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Mostly	Very Much
Different types of college opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Different types of career opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On a regular day at school, how often are the following things true in your advanced classes?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
My teacher teaches the whole class together as one big group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do school work in small groups with other students who are in the same grade as me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do school work in small groups with other students who are in a different grade than me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do school work on my own (independently).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get to choose what I'm studying or working on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get to do research on topics that interest me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My teacher seeks my input on what I want to learn.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We are now going to ask you a set of questions, once for each of the areas you indicated that you take advanced classes. Please think about the advanced class or classes in that area specifically when you are answering questions.

English Language Arts (ELA)

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work at a different pace than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

The pace of instruction in this class is:

- Too slow
- About right
- Too fast

Math

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy

- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work at a different pace than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

The pace of instruction in this class is:

- Too slow
- About right
- Too fast

Science

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work at a different pace than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

The pace of instruction in this class is:

- Too slow
- About right
- Too fast

Social Studies

The work we do during class is:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

My homework assignments are:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of homework I have is:

- Not enough
- About right
- Too much

My work in this class is different than what the rest of the class is working on.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

I am allowed to do school work at a different pace than others in the class.

- Almost never
- Sometimes
- Almost always

The pace of instruction in this class is:

- Too slow
- About right
- Too fast

Did you complete a Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) this year (also known as a GT project)?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Skip To: End of Block If Did you complete a Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) this year (also known as a GT proje... = No

Skip To: End of Block If Did you complete a Texas Performance Standards Project (TPSP) this year (also known as a GT proje... = I don't know

Which of the following is more true? (pick one)

- The TPSP was required - I was told I had to do it
- The TPSP was optional - I could decide if I wanted to do it

Where did you do most of the work for your TPSP?

- During class
- Outside of class
- Equally during class and outside of class

Which of the following is more true?

- My teacher told me what my TPSP topic would be (or picked my TPSP topic for me)
- My teacher let me pick my TPSP topic

How interested were you in the topic of your TPSP?

- Not at all
- Very little
- Somewhat
- Mostly
- Very much

Completing your TPSP this year was:

- Too easy
- About right
- Too hard

The amount of time you spent working on your TPSP this year was:

- Too little
- About right
- Too much

Display This Question: If What grade are you in? = 12th Grade

Did you participate in the District's mentorship program?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question: If Did you participate in the District's mentorship program? = Yes

Would you recommend this program to other students?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Display This Question: If What grade are you in? = 11th Grade

Did you apply to participate in the District's mentorship program?

- Yes
- No

Display This Question: If Did you apply to participate in the District's mentorship program? = No

Are you aware of the District's mentorship program available to high school seniors?

- Yes, I know about it
- I've heard about it, but don't know much about it
- No, I've never heard about it

Display This Question: If What grade are you in? = 6th Grade or 7th Grade or 8th Grade or 9th Grade or 10th Grade

Are you aware of the District's mentorship program available to high school seniors?

- Yes, I know about it
- I have heard about it, but don't know much about it
- No, I've never heard about it

Display This Question: If What grade are you in? = 6th Grade or 7th Grade or 8th Grade or 9th Grade or 10th Grade

Are you interested in applying to the District's mentorship program in high school?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- I need to know more about it first

Is there at least one adult at school you can talk to you about your feelings?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

How much are the following true for you?

	Not true for me	Sometimes true/ Sometimes not true	True for me
My teachers understand me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have friends with similar interests as me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teachers expect too much of me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am well-behaved in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I follow directions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am excited to go to class most every day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix D – Parent Survey

FBISD GT Parent Survey

Gibson Consulting Group is conducting a review of the overall effectiveness and efficiency of Fort Bend ISD's Gifted and Talented (GT) program. As part of that review we are seeking your input.

Why am I receiving this survey? You are receiving this survey because you are a parent or guardian of a student in the FBISD GT program.

How long will this survey take? The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

What is the purpose of this survey? The purpose of this survey is to learn your perceptions of the quality of the GT program in Fort Bend ISD. Your responses will help guide efforts to improve services and results for children and families.

Who is being asked to complete this survey? All parents/guardians of students currently in the GT program in Fort Bend ISD are being asked to complete this survey. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions you do not want to answer.

Will your responses be kept confidential? We will keep your identity and the information that you share confidential, to the extent permitted by law. Only the research team at Gibson Consulting Group will have access to your identifiable responses. Survey data will be summarized when reported. We are not reporting on individual students, campuses, or staff.

How will results be reported? Information you provide will be combined across all input received from Fort Bend ISD parents/guardians. No individually identifiable data will be included in the report. For example, feedback may be provided to the district such as the percentage of parents who responded a certain way or the mean rating parents gave to various survey items.

Questions? If you have any questions, contact the Gibson Consulting Group Project Director, Keri Munkwitz at kmunkwitz@gibsonconsult.com.

Click on the forward button to participate.

If you have more than one child in the GT program, please respond to questions on this survey for ***your oldest child in the GT program***.

In what grade is the child you are answering about?

▼ Kindergarten (1) ... 12th grade (13)

This school year, did your child attend classes:

- Mostly in-person at the school building (even if online while there)
- Mostly online from home or someone else's home (via Microsoft Teams)
- Some in-person and some online

In which content area(s) is your child identified for GT services? (select all that apply)

- English Language Arts (ELA) (Reading/Writing)
- Math
- Science
- Social Studies
- I don't know

Who referred your child for testing for GT services?

- A parent or guardian
- A teacher
- A school leader, like a principal or assistant principal
- I don't know/I don't remember
- Other (please specify): _____

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I understand the qualification criteria for the District's GT Program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The District provides parents with helpful information about the unique needs of gifted children.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am provided with sufficient information about the GT Program.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Overall, how challenged is your child in the content area(s) for which he/she has been identified?

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Mostly
- Very Much

To what extent is the GT program meeting your child's academic needs?

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Mostly
- Very Much

How prepared was your child for the advanced coursework in his/her GT classes?

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Mostly
- Very Much

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The GT Program helps my child develop <u>critical thinking</u> skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The GT Program helps my child develop <u>creative thinking</u> skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The GT Program helps my child develop <u>time management</u> skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The GT Program helps my child develop <u>organizational</u> skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The GT Program helps my child develop <u>self-discipline</u> .	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work that my child completes as part of the GT program is at the right level of difficulty.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Use the "I'm not sure/I don't know" option as needed.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I'm not sure/I don't know
The school provides a variety of appropriate learning experiences for my child based on his/her needs, interests, and abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child's teacher(s) provides more advanced instruction to meet my child's learning needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My child is often allowed to work at a different pace than other students in the classroom.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel informed about what is happening in my child's GT and/or advanced classes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my child benefits from being grouped with students of similar academic abilities and interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The amount of homework your child has, on average, is:

- Too little
- About right
- Too much

The difficulty of the homework your child has, on average, is:

- Too easy
- Just right
- Too hard

What is your overall perception of the quality of the GT program in your child's grade level?

- Very negative
- Negative
- Positive

- Very positive

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The GT program has had a positive impact on my child's attitude toward school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The District meets the social and emotional needs of my child.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participating in the GT program helped my child develop friendships.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The GT program provides an environment where my child can be his/her "true self"?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Are you a member of the Fort Bend ISD Gifted and Talented Parent Advisory Committee (GTPAC)?

- Yes
- No

The District communicates with GT parents in different ways. Which of the following have you received or accessed this school year? *(Check all that apply.)*

- Received District communications about the GT Program (e.g., emails, newsletters).
- Received campus communications about the GT Program (e.g., emails, newsletters).
- Attended a GT parent advisory committee (GTPAC) meeting (in person or remote).
- Attended a GT parent information night (in person or remote).
- Visited the GT Program web page on the District's website.
- Contacted the Champion of Gifted Services (COGS) on your child's campus.
- Participated in a parent-teacher conference with my child's GT and/or pre-AP/AP teacher(s) (in person or remote).

Overall, how satisfied are you with the communications you receive about the GT Program?

- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied

- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied

In what way(s) could Fort Bend ISD improve the GT program to better meet the needs of students?
