

# Van Alstyne Unique Learners and Thinkers

## Van Alstyne ISD

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## PURPOSE

The purpose of the VAISD gifted and talented program is to identify gifted students and nurture their special abilities and needs, thereby, assisting them in translating their gifts of potential into productive performances and products that are commensurate with their abilities.

An appropriate education for the gifted child cannot be the sole responsibility of either teachers or parents. Both groups must work closely together in order to utilize all the needed educational resources for these children. Communication between parents and school is the most important way of achieving this desired relationship.

This handbook was written with the hope that the content will inform parents of VAULT students about the district's gifted program, provide them with insight on the gifted, and furnish them with helpful resources.

## GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

According to the State of Texas, a gifted and talented student 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:

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.

# PROGRAM GOALS

The VAISD Gifted and Talented students will:

1. become aware of his/her own unique potential and learning style in order to develop these abilities for the betterment of self and society
2. utilize higher level thinking skills to develop intellectual curiosity in critical, creative, and productive thinking.
3. understand and apply the problem-solving process in a cooperative group setting through analysis and evaluation of a real life situation.
4. develop advanced reference skills for using multiple concepts and resources in synthesizing an elaborate product.

## PROGRAM DELIVERY

### Elementary School

Kindergarten students will be screened in March. They will be served through inclusion in the regular classroom. Classroom teachers will provide enrichment activities to enhance their learning experience.

Grades 1-4 students will be cluster grouped in the regular classroom environment utilizing curriculum compacting, in-depth/independent research or tasks, autonomous learner model, and enrichment. VAULT students will be pulled once weekly to receive additional technology time to work on projects and work on higher level thinking websites.

### Middle School

Grades 5 and 6 will be served daily through their VAULT/Reading class with a social studies emphasis and utilizing cross curricular

thematic units. Tasks or independent studies will be required. Computer access will be made available.

### Middle School and High School

Grade 7-12 will be served daily through honors, pre-advanced placement, and advanced placement courses in the core subject areas. Gifted and Talented students will adhere to the district AP policy guidelines and will only be able to withdraw from an AP class at semester break. Schedule changes may be approved at the discretion of the principal.

## SELECTION PROCESS

Nominations may originate with teachers, parents, administrators, students, or counselors.

- Step 1      Nominations: Nomination form and Parent Inventory forms are made available to all teachers, parents and students. VAULT screening is publicized in newspaper, school newsletters/web pages, and letters sent home from campuses.
- Step 2      Teacher and Parents must complete their respective forms. Forms must be completed and parent permission granted prior to testing.
- Step 3      Testing Scheduled: All eligible nominated students are tested with a cognitive abilities assessment, achievement assessment, and creativity assessment by the VAULT specialist.
- Step 4      Testing done: by VAULT specialist within a six week period.
- Step 5      VAULT specialist completes student profiles with the subjective and non-subjective data.

- Step 6      Student Profiles go through the selection committee: campus selection committees consist of the VAULT specialist, building principal, counselor, and two campus teachers with gifted training.
- Step 7      Letters and permission forms are sent to the parents with notification of the committee decisions.
- Step 8      If permission is granted, students will be scheduled into VAULT classes at the start of the next six week period.

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

The majority of the data collected on the student must fall at or above the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or into the superior range. The data comes from standardized tests designed to measure learning potential and achievement and subjective measures such as creativity and parent/teacher observations.

## CRITERIA FOR TRANSFER

Students transferring into the Van Alstyne Independent School District who are interested in participating in VAULT will have the opportunity to test for the program according to the following guidelines:

1. All students will be tested within a six week period by the VAULT specialist. Testing is ongoing through each six weeks and selection is scheduled at the end of each six weeks period. No student will be placed in the program, regardless of previous placement, until the screening process is completed.
2. VAULT brochures will be available on each campus to inform the parents of the selection process and general criteria for identification. Parents of transferring students will also be provided with a release form to complete. It is the student's parents' responsibility to initiate a request for VAULT screening.

## PROBATION

1. The purpose of a probation period is to allow the student to set goals for improvement when minimum performance criteria are not being met in the gifted program and/or regular classroom.
2. A conference is mandatory when a minimum performance criterion for VAULT is not being met or performance is below 75 in language arts, math, science, and/or social studies.
3. The length of the probation period is to be determined during the initial conference concerning probation. As a general rule, three weeks or until the end of the grading period is usually sufficient. Students will continue to participate in scheduled classes.
4. A conference must also be held at the end of the probation period.

## FURLOUGH

If at the end of the probationary period, the VAULT committee determines that sufficient progress has not been made, the student may not participate in VAULT activities for a semester in order that the goals are met. Progress will be monitored by the VAULT committee.

## EXIT

If at the end of the furlough period progress is still unsatisfactory, the VAULT committee may conclude that placement in VAULT is no longer beneficial to the student, and he/she will be placed in an educational environment conducive to his/her needs.

If the student and the student's parents conclude that placement in VAULT is no longer beneficial to the student, the student may exit the program. An exit cannot be unilaterally decided by the VAULT specialist. Gifted and Talented students will adhere to the district AP policy guidelines and will only be able to withdraw from an AP class at

semester break. Schedule changes may be approved at the discretion of the principal.

A student in the VAULT program may exit out for the period of one year if he/she feels that he/she can not meet the obligations of the program. The reasons may be extra-curricular activities, personal, or academic. The student, parent or teacher can request an exit. This exit does not prevent the student from re-entering VAULT within a year. If the student chooses to re-enter the program he/she can do so at the program level without being retested. If the student is out of the program for more than one year he/she must be retested and qualify to re-enter the VAULT program.

## APPEALS

Parents, students, and/or educators may appeal placement decisions. Written request for an appeal meeting must be submitted to the VAULT specialist within two weeks after notification of eligibility letter is received. New substantiating data must be presented to the VAULT committee for review. The VAULT committee consisting of a campus principal, counselor, VAULT specialist, and two campus teachers with gifted training will review the new data and make the final decision.