



Vistas Talent Pool *Program Overview*

The Vistas Talent Pool Program identifies and nurtures advanced academic potential in students from historically underrepresented populations (including English Language Learners (ELL), economically disadvantaged, African American, and Hispanic students). The aim of the Vistas Talent Pool initiative is to provide an enriched educational environment for high ability students on campuses that receive Title I funds or designated as low-Social Economic Schools (low-SES) to enable them to reach their full potential intellectually and increase representation of diverse students in Advanced Academic Programs.

Fort Bend ISD (FBISD) created the Vistas Talent Pool program to provide challenging learning opportunities and research-based instructional strategies to build capacity of high ability students and bridge the gap between non-verbal and verbal skills as evidenced on tests that measure gifted potential.

The purpose of selecting students to participate in a Vistas Talent Pool is to:

- Find and nurture gifted potential.
- Support academic mindsets and habits.
- Prepare students for more challenging and rigorous courses.

Access and Opportunity

The Vistas Talent Pool program encourages a school culture that:

- Provides many opportunities for tasks that demonstrate talent.
- Emphasizes students' ability to think, reason, and problem solve.
- Provides opportunities for enrichment and support for success in advanced coursework.

Selection for the Vistas Talent Pool

Students are selected for the Vistas program through formal (i.e., cognitive abilities assessments) and informal (i.e., teacher observations) measures that provide evidence of high ability. All kindergarten students attending a campus that receives Title I funds or designated as a low-Social Economic School (low-SES) participate in a universal screener to determine eligibility for the Vistas Talent Pool. Kindergarten teachers use the FBISD Gifted Behavior Observation questionnaire to identify students who exhibit high ability or gifted potential characteristics in the classroom.

The selection criteria for the Vistas program include:

- An ability score at or above the 71st percentile in at least one area (non-verbal, verbal, quantitative) on the CogAT
- A score at or above the 80th percentile on the FBISD Gifted Behavior Observation Questionnaire
- Teacher observations of student behavior

Students who nearly meet these criteria (e.g., who score in the 70th percentile of the CogAT), may still be considered for the Vistas program after their campus' selection committee, consisting of Kindergarten teachers, a school counselor, the school principal and a District representative, reviews teacher observations of their behavior. Students begin participation in the Vistas program the following year (i.e., in Grade 1) at their respective elementary campuses. If there are too few GT students to form a separate class, the Vistas program serves both GT students and Vistas students in the same class. If indicated, kindergarten students are also identified for gifted services at that time.

Classroom Instruction

Students participating in the Vistas Talent Pool program will receive differentiated services that are matched to their needs, interests, and abilities. Vistas Talent Pool students are cluster-grouped for reading and math. A GT trained classroom teacher will enrich the curriculum to build the verbal intelligence of students. To strengthen verbal intelligence, instruction focuses on the linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects of background knowledge through language rich classrooms. Students receive services in a classroom that nurtures the traits, aptitudes, and characteristics of gifted students through rich learning opportunities. In addition to the standard curriculum, Vistas students benefit from an enriched language environment to develop verbal and quantitative reasoning skills, logic, sequential memory, and vocabulary. Teachers provide opportunities for students to use nonlinguistic representation, questioning, and extensive practice in the language of the discipline for added depth and complexity.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To enhance teachers' abilities to nurture the intellectual potential of Vistas students, elementary bilingual and general education Kindergarten teachers are required to participate in Identification and Assessment for the Vistas Talent Pool Selection training. This training teaches educators how to identify students with gifted characteristics and document their observations for the Vistas selection process. Teachers serving the Vistas Talent Pool students must complete 30 hours of GT foundation training, as well as on-going staff development through three, half-day trainings throughout the year that focus on research-based instructional strategies to increase students' verbal acuity.

Vistas Talent Pool-Beyond Elementary

Vistas Talent Pools are currently served in elementary school. As students move to middle school, staff work with students and families to ensure continued support for access and success in advanced coursework.



GT Contact Information
General Inquiries
(281) 634-1357

GTFBISD@fortbendisd.com
www.fortbendisd.com/GT