

QUEST: IN A NUTSHELL

WHAT IS IT?

1. The word QUEST is really an acronym for: Quality Utilization and Enrichment of Student Talents.
2. QUEST is a program designed to meet the needs of students who excel or show potential to excel in a combination of two of the areas of giftedness as defined by the state of Texas:
 - High general intellectual ability
 - Creative and productive thinking

HOW ARE STUDENTS IDENTIFIED?

1. Students at grades K-12 may be nominated for this gifted and talented program at any time by district personnel, parents, self, peers, or others. The person nominating a student should complete a referral form. These forms are available from the QUEST resource teacher or at <http://www.leanderisd.org> under Departments, Gifted/Talented, QUEST Information Packet. Nominated students would then follow the identification process described in No. 2.
2. Identification is a multi-step process.

STEP ONE - Screening.

- All students new to the district in grades 1-5 are automatically placed in the nomination pool on all elementary campuses for screening in August and May. All kindergarten students are screened in January and February, and kindergarten QUEST classes start on March 1. Several screening dates are offered during the summer for new 6th-12th grade students. Summer screening information is posted on the Leanderisd.org website and provided to all secondary campuses. Nomination is an ongoing throughout the school year. The purpose of the screening is to identify those students who demonstrate potential in the areas of

- General Intellectual Ability and
- Creative and Productive Thinking

- a. Multiple measures of creative/divergent thinking are administered by the campus QUEST teacher and scored by the district Identification and Placement Committee. These tests indicate creative and productive thinking ability and should not be confused with artistic ability.
- b. At the same time, information from multiple measures of general intellectual ability are gathered by the QUEST teacher.
- c. Students must qualify on a preponderance of the twelve screening measures to move to Step Two.

STEP TWO - Identification

- If a student meets the qualifying criteria in Step 1, permission from the parent is requested for individual testing in the area of high general intellectual ability. Multiple measures of intellectual ability are administered and other documentation of intellectual ability are collected by the campus QUEST teacher.

STEP THREE - Placement

- All documentation is brought before a district screening committee. This committee makes the final decision for placement. Students in grades K-12 must qualify in the 95%ile or higher on at least two measures of general intellectual ability. All screening and testing data is reviewed by the QUEST Identification and Placement Committee. If the data indicates that the student's educational needs would benefit from participation in the program, parental permission is required for entry into the QUEST program.

WHAT DO QUEST STUDENTS LEARN?

1. Continuum

The skills taught in QUEST are structured in a spiraling curriculum, from grades Kindergarten - Twelve, focusing on three key areas:

- Creative Thinking Skills - what they are and how they are used to enhance learning
- Critical Thinking Skills - what they are and how they apply to problem solving, decision making, and more in-depth learning
- Research Skills - what they are, how they are used to explore issues and problems, and how findings or results are presented or reported to others.

Students experience these skills at an increasingly sophisticated level throughout the grades. Their learning experiences and expectations in these areas are at a level beyond what would be developmentally appropriate for age level peers.

- K-5 is an interdisciplinary pull-out program
- 6-8 is a daily interdisciplinary gifted curriculum
- High School includes a QUEST Lab, QUEST Independent Study Mentorship Class, Pre-AP English classes and a QUEST Facilitator

2. Array

• The QUEST K-12 curriculum is interdisciplinary in nature. This interdisciplinary curriculum addresses students' strengths and interests in the four content areas but does not accelerate a single discipline such as reading, math, science, etc. Instead, students' many interests and strengths are expanded through their ability to apply the skills to all disciplines. They are also given many individual choices in selecting areas to study within the QUEST curriculum, including structured independent studies. This variety and depth of choice is often very difficult to facilitate in the regular classroom.

- Grades 1-5 students with advanced abilities in language arts may be identified for the PACE Language Arts. In grades 1-7, students with advanced abilities in math may be identified for PACE Math Programs. Services may be provided through flexible grouping patterns, differentiated curricula, and accelerated or advanced curricula. For more information on these programs, please contact your campus counselor.
- Grades 6- 8 students may elect to take Pre-AP Language Arts.
- Grade 8 students may elect to take Pre-AP Social Studies.
- Middle school students with advanced math abilities may take Algebra and/or Geometry, if qualify with prerequisite math courses or credits.
- 9-12 students may enroll in Pre-AP/IB, Advanced Placement (AP), or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes in various foundation and enrichment areas. For more information on these programs, please contact your campus counselor.

HOW DO OTHER STUDENTS LEARN THE SKILLS TAUGHT IN QUEST?

1. The skills taught through the QUEST curriculum are not isolated for QUEST students only. Many classroom teachers incorporate these skills into the regular curriculum in an age appropriate manner. The difference is in WHEN the skills are introduced and in the PACE and DEPTH at which they are applied. Training in the teaching of these skills and processes are available to all teachers.
3. The QUEST resource teacher is available to serve all students through assisting teachers in planning instruction, in presenting demonstration lessons or workshop sessions, and/or in working with groups on special projects and/or skills as determined by campus need and QUEST teacher availability.

HOW DO TEACHERS AND PARENTS LEARN ABOUT QUEST?

This information is made available in the following ways.

- Awareness sessions presented by the QUEST resource teacher may be offered on campuses. These sessions are designed to explain what the program is, who the program can benefit, what behaviors to look for, how the identification process works, and what the students in the program do.
- LISD web site
<http://www.leanderisd.org/default.aspx?name=dept.QUEST.main>
- QUEST Parents' FAQ (pathway:
<http://classroom.leanderisd.org/default.aspx?QUEST%20Instructional%20Services/home>
- Campus QUEST web sites
- **QUEST Quotes**, the district newsletter about QUEST is published twice a year, available online.
- The QUEST teacher is available by appointment to give a more in-depth explanation to teachers, parents, students, or community members.

WHAT TRAINING DO TEACHERS RECEIVE?

- All QUEST teachers receive 30 hours of training in gifted education prior to being assigned as QUEST teachers. QUEST teachers receive on-going training locally and through state conferences and other seminars dealing with best practices and current research for educating the talented and gifted (at least six hours annual update in training each year). They then share that learning with their colleagues.
- All secondary teachers of advanced/accelerated courses receive 30 hours of training in gifted education. This includes twelve hours of nature and needs of the gifted and identification and assessment of the gifted. The remaining eighteen hours of training are in the teachers' content areas and other areas of gifted education. They also receive an annual six-hour update in gifted education each year.
- All elementary QUEST cluster classroom teachers receive an initial six hours of training in gifted education. Then, each year thereafter, they receive on-going training locally (at least three hours each year).
- These same opportunities are made available to other interested teachers.

Outstanding Student Product Portfolio

Adapted from material by Bertie Kingore, Ph.D.

Your insight about your child's at-home demonstrations of creative or intellectual thinking provides an additional measure of your child's abilities and helps document the depth and complexity of your child's thinking. Product examples also document the gifted characteristics you have observed at home. Suggestions for developing a portfolio of Outstanding Student Products are provided below.

1. Use a pocket folder or expandable folder as a portfolio container to organize products your child has **independently** produced. Photographs can represent large or three-dimensional items. Or, you can submit large items to the QUEST teacher.
2. Keep the portfolio manageable. Generally, **six to twelve items** are probably sufficient to represent your child's talents. A small sampling of **carefully selected** and **labeled** products makes a more thoughtful presentation than a large scrapbook approach.
3. **Date** each product, at least with the **year and age** of your child when the **product was created**. It is important for authenticity and an achievement level comparison to note when each item was completed. Products may be from past as well as current years.
4. If needed for clarity, prepare **brief** product explanations of how your child demonstrated a specific creative or intellectual characteristic through that product or during the process of making it.
5. Select products that are a true and integral **reflection** of your child's thinking rather than artificial or isolated skills or events.
6. Products that document giftedness demonstrate **depth, complexity, creative thinking**, and the ability to process and reorganize information to produce a **product unique for that age or level**. The products may substantiate your child's interest and expertise in areas that are not typical for a child that age.
7. Products selected for a portfolio must be completed **independently** by the child **without assistance except for safety or developmental issues**.
 - Remaking products into adult projects risks children acquiring feelings of doubt and ambiguity about their abilities.
 - The portfolio is to **substantiate** your child's **independent abilities**.
 - The **exception** would be assistance due to safety or developmental ability issues.

In order to cast the widest net possible in screening and identifying for the LISD gifted program, QUEST, the following process is followed.

1. In August of each school year, all new **1-5** grade students are automatically placed in the nomination pool. Identification is a two-step process.
 - a. Step 1. All students are screened using multiple measures of creative/divergent thinking and multiple measures of general intellectual ability.
 - b. Step 2. Those students who qualify on **any** four of the measures in Step 1 are then tested using multiple measures of general intellectual ability. These measures may include but are not limited to individual verbal and non-verbal mental ability tests, academic achievement tests, grades, and general intellectual scales. Students in K-12 must qualify on **two intellectual ability** measures at the **95%ile or higher** to be placed in QUEST. All screening and testing decisions are made by the district-wide QUEST Identification and Placement Committee.
 - 1) All members received at least 30 hours of GT training, including theory and administration of screening and testing instruments, and are current with the 6-hour gifted training update.
 - 2) In cases of a “preponderance of creative and intellectual ability,” the Committee may place students into QUEST on a monitored status.
 - 3) Placement into QUEST requires parental permission.
2. Several screening dates are offered during the summer for grades **6-12** students. Summer screening information is posted on the Leander ISD website and provided to all secondary campus counselors, registrars and office staff.
3. Referrals from students, teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents are accepted throughout the school year for grades K-12.
4. Screening for grades 1-5 occurs during August and May. Kindergarten screening occurs during January and May. Screening for grades 6-12 occurs during the summer preceding the school year.
5. Transfer gifted students are screened within thirty days of transferring into LISD and providing GT documentation from previous districts.
6. All kindergarten students are screened in January. Prior to this screening, elementary QUEST teachers provide a minimum of four whole-class lessons to every kindergarten class. These lessons provide common creative and critical thinking experiences.
7. New K-5 students are screened in May.
8. Once identified, QUEST students are NOT re-screened or retested, unless they have furloughed or exited from the program.
9. Furloughed QUEST students are retested or re-screened following the recommendations of the QUEST Identification and Placement Committee, based on individual student needs, performance, and history.
10. In order to furlough or exit from the program, parents and students conference with the campus QUEST teacher and follow the steps of the furlough/exit process. Parents, students, or QUEST teachers may initiate the furlough/exit process.

Dear Parent,

The Leander ISD QUEST Program for gifted and talented serves students who demonstrate potential in the following areas of gifted behaviors:

1. creative and productive thinking, and
2. general intellectual ability

Your completion of the attached, "Parent Referral Survey" will provide descriptions of times you observed those behaviors. **Also, please submit several samples of projects your child has independently built, drawn, written, or created in some way.** (Please see the "Outstanding Student Product Portfolio" explanation.) These will be returned to you. The purpose of the parent referral is to obtain a complete profile of a student's creative and productive thinking behaviors and characteristics. The information you provide will help us in determining if participation in the QUEST Program would benefit your child. Please return to your campus QUEST teacher.

Sincerely,
QUEST Staff

QUEST PARENT REFERRAL SURVEY: Things My Child Likes to Do

(from Jim Delisle 1979) rev. 2001

Name of Child: _____ Campus: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____
Name of Person Completing Form: _____ Relationship to Child: _____
Home/Work Phone Numbers: _____

In order to make educational decisions concerning your child, we need your help in obtaining a complete profile of your child's creative and productive thinking behaviors and characteristics. Please consider each of the behaviors listed below as they might apply to your child's interest, activities, and behaviors, and circle the appropriate response for your child. To help clarify items, we have included examples for each one. You should rate your child based on the general item, not the example. *For those items you circle **Quite Often or Almost Always**, please include a **description of a specific time your child demonstrated the behavior.**

1. My child will spend more time and energy than his/her age mates on a topic of his/her interest. (For example: Jenna wants to be a fashion designer and spends her free time designing new fashions and using her dolls as fitting models.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

2. My child is a "self-starter" who works well alone, needing few directions and little supervision. (For example: After watching a film about musical instruments, Derek began to make his own guitar from materials he found around the garage.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

3. My child sets high personal goals and expects to see results from his/her work. (For example: Marissa insisted on building a robot from spare machine parts even though she knew nothing about engines or construction.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

4. My child gets so involved with a project that he/she gives up other pleasures in order to work on it. (For example: Chris is writing a book about his town's history and spends each night examining historical records and documents -- even when he knows he's missing his favorite TV show.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

5. My child continues to work on a project even when faced with temporary defeats and slow results. (For example: After building a model rocket, Allison continued to try to launch it, despite several failures and "crash landings.")

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

6. My child knows what is done well and what needs to be improved when working on a project. (For example: After building a scale model of a lunar city, Obi realized that there weren't enough solar collectors to heat all the homes he had built.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

7. My child is a "doer" who begins a project and shows finished products of his/her ideas. (For example: Kali began working on a puppet show four months ago and has since built a stage and puppets and a written script. Tomorrow she's presenting it to the PTA.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

8. My child suggests imaginative ways of doing things, even if the suggestions are sometimes impractical. (For example: If you really want to clean the refrigerator, why don't we move it outside and I'll hose it down -- that will defrost it, too.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

9. When my child tells about something that is very unusual, he/she expresses him/herself by elaborate gestures, pictures, or words. (For example: "The only way I can show you how the ballet dancer spun around is if I stand on my tiptoes on the record player and put the speed up to 78.")

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

10. My child uses common materials in ways not typically expected. (For example: "I'll bring a deck of cards when we go camping. If it rains, we can use them to start a fire, and if it's dry, we can play "Go Fish.")

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

11. My child avoids typical ways of doing things, choosing instead to find new ways to approach a problem or topic. (For example: "I had trouble moving this box to the other side of the garage, so I used these four broom handles as rollers and just pushed it along.")

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

12. My child likes to “play with ideas,” often making up situations which probably will not occur. (For example: “I wonder what would happen if a scientist found a way to kill all insects and then went ahead and did it.”)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

13. My child often finds humor in situations or events that are not obviously funny to most children their age. (For example: Travis thoroughly enjoys play on words and puns. He creates his own that he shares at school but usually only the teacher “gets” them.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

14. My child prefers working or playing alone rather than doing something “just to go along with the group.” (For example: Zachary works on his science experiments that he designs himself rather than goes with his friends to hang out at the mall on weekends.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

15. My child tends to be a leader in group situations. (For example: Angela organized her neighborhood friends into a drama club. She had them write scripts, make props, and put on performances for neighborhood audiences.)

Seldom or Never Sometimes Quite Often* Almost Always*

Specific example demonstrated by your child:

General Intellectual Scale, adapted from Silverman, Chitwood, and Waters

Student name: _____ Campus: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Person completing scale: _____ Relationship to student: _____

Please circle the number that most describes your child/student, and return this form to the QUEST teacher as soon as possible. Thank you for your help.

Compared to other students of his/her age, this student...

- | | Seldom | Occasionally | Often |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 1. has a longer attention span. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 2. displays an excellent memory. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 3. has keen powers of observation. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 4. displays ability with numbers. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 5. perseveres, when interested. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 6. is concerned with justice and fairness. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 7. shows high intensity in studies. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 8. has a wide range of interests. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 9. uses an extensive vocabulary. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 10. displays personal sensitivity. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 11. shows a high degree of creative thinking. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 12. tends to be a perfectionist. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 13. has a preference for older companions. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 14. is good at jigsaw puzzles, making sense of patterns. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 15. has good problem solving and reasoning abilities. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 16. displays a vivid imagination. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 17. shows compassion for others. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 18. makes judgments mature for age. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 19. has a keen sense of humor. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 20. demonstrates unusual curiosity. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 21. has advanced abilities in one or more subjects. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 22. shows early or advanced reading ability. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 23. tends to question authority. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 24. tends to be an independent learner. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |
| 25. appears to learn rapidly. | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 |