

## **HORIZONS Testing Appeal Process Rights for Parents**

**Katrina Nelson, Director of Advanced Academics**

**HORIZONS Program District Contact**

**katrina.nelson@cfisd.net**

**PHONE: 281-517-2640/FAX: 281-807-8639**

If a child does not qualify for the HORIZONS program, parents have due process rights to request an appeal. Teachers or school administrators may also appeal a DNQ (Did Not Qualify) decision if they have additional evidence to identify gifted potential in the classroom. Parents should review “Who Are the Gifted” located on the HORIZONS webpage to help them understand the concept of giftedness prior to submitting an appeal and review the **Q & A** information below to consider options for advocating for a child.

### **What constitutes an appeal?**

- A student qualifies for HORIZONS with an ability index of 130 or greater. An appeal may be made by a parent, teacher, or administrator for scores of 125-129 based on significant advanced abilities consistently demonstrated in the classroom and supported by academic and performance data (STAAR/EOC, benchmark scores, grades, previous abilities test scores, teacher observations, or student performance samples) not evidenced by HORIZONS screening scores. High school students may appeal on their own behalf.
- Additional criteria for an appeal include
  - \* illness immediately before or during testing with documentation of the illness,
  - \* emotional duress due to a family crisis during testing with documentation,
  - \* accommodations not provided during testing for students with special needs.
- Scores falling below 125 with no evidence of advanced ability or additional criteria are not within the appealable range; therefore, parents may not seek an appeal.
- If one or more of the criteria for an appeal has been met, the appeal process may begin.

### **What additional information does a parent need to know before submitting an appeal?**

- An appeal does not mean that a child will be placed automatically in the program. It means only that additional information will be reviewed before the committee makes a decision.
- If the parent feels that submitting an appeal is appropriate, he/she should first submit a written request to the campus principal.
- The request must include the child’s name, grade, and school; the parent’s name, home address, home and work phone numbers, and e-mail address; a brief explanation of the reasons for the appeal.
- The request for an appeal may be sent by postal mail or e-mailed to the campus principal. If mailed, the appeal request must be postmarked with the date indicating the submission was sent within the expected timeframe of fifteen school days.
- If the parent makes a subsequent decision to appeal at the district level to the Director of Advanced Academics, the request should be sent by postal mail or e-mailed and must include the child’s name, grade, and school; the parent’s name, home address, home and work phone numbers, and e-mail address; the date and decision of the Campus Appeal Committee; and a brief explanation of the reason for the appeal.

## What are the steps for an appeal?

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1. Parents must make a written request for an appeal to the building principal within **fifteen** school days of the date stated on the placement letter sent home. Appeals will not be accepted outside of this window of time.
2. The appeal is limited to only students whose scores meet previously-stated criteria.
3. Upon receipt of the appeal request, a Campus Appeal Committee will be formed to review the selection procedures with the parent seeking the appeal and to consider the criteria upon which the appeal is based.
4. The Campus Appeal Committee will either support the selection committee's original decision or decide to place the student in the HORIZONS program.
5. A letter will be sent home informing the parent of the committee's decision within three school days of the Campus Appeal Committee meeting to review the appeal.
6. If the parent is not satisfied with the decision of the Campus Appeal Committee and wishes to appeal at the district level, he/she must request a *Parent Information/Data Collection* packet from the Campus Appeal Committee and submit a written request for an appeal to the Director of Advanced Academics.
7. A district-level appeal may not be pursued unless the campus-appeal process has been completed.
8. The *Parent Information/Data Collection* packet must be completed and submitted to the Director of Advanced Academics after a written request for an appeal has been made. The packet includes these items:
  - a survey regarding current/past intellectual ability, behavioral patterns, and academic performance
  - a brief written summary of the student's interests, passions, hobbies, and time spent outside school
  - a portfolio of student work that shows superior ability and advanced thinking
  - a student self-reflection.
9. Once the required parent information has been submitted, the District Appeal Committee, comprised of district administrators who have six hours of training in the nature and needs of gifted individuals and are familiar with the identification of students with gifted ability, will be formed to review
  - the campus decision
  - the student's academic and performance data
  - teacher input, if appropriate
  - the survey, portfolio, and student self-reflection provided by the parent.
10. When submitting the required portfolio of student work for a district appeal, the parent should include a large self-addressed manila envelope with postage attached for the return of the items. Report cards, workbooks or worksheets, trophies, or plaques should not be included in the portfolio package.

## What are possible decisions the Campus and/or District Appeal Committee may make?

- If no additional evidence supports gifted potential, the committee may support the original DNQ decision.
- If the data supports a preponderance of evidence of gifted potential, the child may be placed in the HORIZONS program.
- The committee may agree that retesting is appropriate. This recommendation occurs in cases when there is a great discrepancy between testing results and student performance or in cases of documented illness or traumatic experiences that may have negatively affected the student's performance during testing.

## What is meant by a preponderance of evidence?

- School districts must use both qualitative and quantitative measures to identify gifted potential.
- A consistent collection of data is needed to indicate significantly advanced intellectual ability that requires a need for additional academic services.
- High intellectual processing (within the ability range of 130+), behavioral performance (school and home) indicating significantly advanced intellectual ability, or specific performance data (portfolio of products) may be used collectively to identify a preponderance of evidence of gifted potential.

## How will a parent know the decision of the District Appeal Committee?

- Parents will receive a letter indicating the decision within five school days after the District Appeal Committee reaches its decision.
- The decision of the District Appeal Committee is final.

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