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GROUPING

GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

Grouping refers to the careful organisation of gifted students on the basis of need, according to ability or performance, for some or all of the school day. Differences will still be evident and will require appropriate programming and differentiation.

The research on gifted and talented students supports grouping these students by ability or achievement levels. Research shows that grouping gifted students by either ability or achievement level improves their academic, social and emotional outcomes. The research also shows that groupings differ in their academic, social and emotional effects and should be determined by the needs of the students. Grouping gifted students together and providing curriculum to match their understanding and learning pace increases their achievement by approximately half a year. This means that they may achieve in one year what other students may take eighteen months to achieve (Rogers, 2000).

Grouping is designed to be flexible and responsive. Gifted students can be grouped according to ability (potential) or achievement (performance). It is important to remember that just because a student is gifted, they are not necessarily performing at a level equal to their ability.

Ability grouping is designed to be flexible and responsive. It can be short-term or long-term depending on the purpose for the grouping and the particular students for whom the grouping is undertaken.

Various grouping strategies can be used to meet the educational needs of gifted and talented students. These groupings include but are not limited to:

- Full time ability grouping – students are placed in a specialist class for gifted students
- Multi-age class – students grouped by ability or achievement rather than age
- Subject ability/achievement groups across one or more year level
- Cluster groups – gifted students grouped full time within a mainstream classroom
- Within class groups – grouping students by topic or subject
- Pull out/withdrawal program – students withdrawn from class to participate in targeted activities that are linked to the classroom curriculum
- Like ability cooperative groups – similar ability students work together on a task that matches their ability
- Enrichment clusters – students are grouped with others who have interests in the same field.

Irrespective of what grouping strategy is used, students will still need to have an appropriate educational program in place which will differentiate their learning and provide appropriate instructional strategies. Grouping options need to be Irrespective of grouping strategy, students need to have an educational program in place which will differentiate their learning and provide appropriate instructional strategies. Grouping options need to be matched to the individual needs of the gifted learners. Regular assessment should be undertaken to ensure that students are appropriately grouped and to enable them to move between groups as necessary.

Pull out/withdrawal programs should be used with caution. They are often useful for extending the curriculum in specific academic fields. Allowing gifted and talented students to spend the majority of their learning time with “like-minds” is important in terms of their intellectual and social and emotional development.