

Grouping

Parent factsheet: gifted and talented education

Grouping refers to the careful organisation of gifted students based on need, according to ability or performance. Even after grouping, individual student differences will still be evident and will require appropriate programming and differentiation.

Research shows that grouping gifted students by either ability or achievement level improves their academic, social and emotional outcomes. The research also shows that grouping approaches differ in their benefits and should be determined by the needs of the student. 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 18 months to achieve (Rogers, 2000).

Grouping is designed to be flexible and responsive. It is important to remember that just because a student is gifted, they are not necessarily performing at a level equal to their ability. Grouping can be short or long-term depending on purpose and the needs of the student.

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 are 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- Pull out/withdrawal program – students withdrawn from class to participate in targeted activities that are linked to the classroom curriculum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 or
- Enrichment clusters – students are grouped with others who have interests in the same field.

Irrespective of what grouping strategy is used, students need to have an educational program in place which will differentiate their learning and provide appropriate instructional strategies. 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 most of their learning time with 'like-minds' is important in terms of their intellectual and social and emotional development.

Rogers, K. (2002) Lessons Learned about Educating the Gifted and Talented: A Synthesis of Research on Educational Practice, University of New South Wales. Retrieved from <https://aea11gt.pbworks.com/f/LessonsLrnd-Rogers.pdf>