

Policy Title: Gifted and Talented Students
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 All ACT public schools will have in place explicit documentation and clear, transparent processes for meeting the needs of all gifted and talented students.
- 1.2 School principals, in consultation with their school community, will ensure that there are effective and equitable procedures for the identification and provision of developmentally appropriate programs for all gifted and talented students.
- 1.3 School principals are responsible for fostering collaborative home-school partnerships to support gifted and talented students.
- 1.4 Students identified as exceptionally or profoundly gifted, as identified by Feldhusen (1993) and those being accelerated will require an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Those gifted students who are underachieving, have disabilities or specific learning difficulties will also have an ILP.
- 1.5 Teachers, with appropriate support, are responsible for selecting and implementing appropriate teaching strategies to meet the educational needs and interests of gifted and talented students in their classes.
- 1.6 Schools and school districts have a responsibility to coordinate provision for gifted and talented students when it is feasible and more effective to share programs and activities across schools.
- 1.7 Central office and schools have a joint responsibility to provide opportunities for professional development for teaching staff in the education of gifted and talented students.

2. RATIONALE

- 2.1 Students in ACT public schools who are gifted and talented must be recognised as having unique educational needs and be catered for in order that their learning outcomes are optimised. This policy sets out responsibilities and procedures for the provision of gifted and talented education in respect of:
 - identification
 - grouping
 - differentiation of the curriculum
 - acceleration
 - early entry
 - other educational strategies and programs.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Acceleration

Acceleration is a placement process in which a student is placed with an age cohort ahead of his or her chronological age or school year in one subject, several subjects or across a whole learning year. Such progression should be professionally assessed and regularly monitored, as the student's intellectual, social and emotional adjustments also need careful and ongoing evaluation, so that a study-life balance is maintained.

3.2 Curriculum

Curriculum is all learning planned, guided and implemented by the school.

3.3 Curriculum compacting

Curriculum compacting is a form of curriculum differentiation where the student's program is compacted by removing any content or processes where mastery is demonstrated.

3.4 Curriculum differentiation

Curriculum differentiation provides a planned and documented curriculum that is adapted to take into account the needs and abilities of groups of students with particular educational needs. Curriculum differentiation results in slight to major modifications of the curriculum, at the school or classroom level, through adjustments to content, processes, products and learning environment. Curriculum differentiation for gifted and talented students will include **enrichment** and **extension** activities (see definitions below).

3.4 Curriculum telescoping

Curriculum telescoping is a form of acceleration and happens when a student (or group of students) is allowed to complete several years of the school's curriculum in less time. For example, Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 are completed in a total of three, rather than four years. In a 'telescoped' curriculum, material is not necessarily 'skipped', but students move more rapidly through all material. In this way the needs of one or a number of gifted and talented students can be met by increasing the pace of instruction.

3.5 Early entry

Early entry refers to eligibility for early enrolment to preschool or kindergarten for gifted and talented students. Early entry is a placement process, not an educational program. Schools should ensure that, where gifted students are granted early entry to preschool or kindergarten, they have a developmentally appropriate differentiated curriculum.

3.6 Enrichment

Enrichment (broadening) is a curriculum differentiation strategy applied where the student's learning pace is faster than that of their cohort. The student's learning is broadened by additional individual inquiry that goes beyond what is expected of the class in terms of level and degree of abstraction, but is related to the content area.

3.7 Extension

Extension (deepening) is a curriculum differentiation strategy in which additional tasks such as portfolios, projects or research questions are given to gifted and talented students in specific areas so that their knowledge and understanding is extended or deepened.

3.8 Giftedness

Giftedness refers to a student's outstanding, innate ability in one or more of the following domains: intellectual, creative, socioaffective or sensorimotor (Gagné,2007). Feldhusen (1993) identifies five levels of giftedness: mild, moderate, high, exceptional and profound. A student may display particular abilities at any stage or point in their schooling.

3.9 Grouping

Grouping is the placing of gifted and talented students either in a dedicated class or a group within a class to more easily provide appropriately differentiated curriculum, learning opportunities, intellectual endeavours and social opportunities. Grouping models catering for the needs of gifted and talented students include one or a combination of the following:

- class performance grouping where students are grouped by topic or subject
- regrouping by achievement for subject instruction
- withdrawal programs for students gifted and talented in a specific area
- ability grouping or separate streaming of students
- regular supplementary workshops, classes or sessions independent of the school timetable.

3.10 Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

An individual learning plan is a document that lists the agreed personalised learning goals and strategies that will be put in place to provide a quality educational program for a student. It is a strategy for tailoring a program or curriculum that can be used for gifted and talented students.

3.11 Talent

Talent refers to outstanding performance in one or more of the following fields: academic, the arts, business, leisure, social action, sports and technology (Gagné, 2003). Talent emerges from giftedness as a consequence of the student's learning experiences.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Identification

4.1.1 Schools will use a variety of strategies and consider a range of evidence to ensure all gifted and talented students are identified. The flow chart in Attachment 1 outlines the key steps and strategies in the ongoing process of identifying and monitoring gifted and talented students. Identifying gifted and talented students should be a systematic, inclusive, equitable and culturally fair process.

4.1.2 Gifted and talented students may not be readily identifiable. Schools must recognise that many factors may inhibit the expression of giftedness or talent, and that gifted and talented students are found in all communities regardless of their socio-economic, cultural or ethnic background. Gifted and talented students can also include students who are underachieving, those with disabilities and those with specific learning difficulties.

4.1.3 Schools will develop an ILP for those small number of students identified as exceptionally or profoundly gifted.

4.2 Grouping

4.2.1 Principals in consultation with their staff, school board and communities are responsible for deciding the best models of grouping and placement process appropriate to meet the needs of their gifted and talented students.

4.2.2 Principals and their teachers should regularly monitor and evaluate the grouping opportunities offered at the school to ensure an appropriately differentiated curriculum.

4.3 Curriculum differentiation

4.3.1 A key success factor in catering for the needs of gifted and talented students is the provision of developmentally appropriate learning opportunities through differentiating the curriculum. Teachers should select and implement appropriate teaching strategies for the range of gifted and talented students in their classes through curriculum differentiation.

4.3.2 Teachers should allow for groups of students and individual students to work in a way that matches their preferred learning style. There should be a learning environment that sets high expectations for each student. They should also create opportunities where students demonstrate mastery and progress at their own pace by negotiating with their teacher what, when and how they learn.

4.3.3 Schools and teachers should provide appropriate **enrichment** and **extension** activities consistent with the dimensions of good pedagogy described in the ACT's *Quality Teaching Model*.

4.4 Acceleration

4.4.1 Principals are responsible for deciding when any form of accelerated progression is appropriate to meet the needs of individual gifted and talented students in their care. Decisions about whether to accelerate a gifted and talented student for an entire year will be made by the principal after consideration of the child's educational, social and emotional needs. This should follow consultation with the school director, the student, the students' parents or caregivers, teachers and the school counsellor.

4.4.2 Before any accelerative practice is recommended, school decision-making teams must use a variety of strategies and consider a range of evidence. The flow chart in Attachment 1 outlines these key steps and strategies. Where a form of acceleration is recommended by the school decision-making team, any acceleration should be targeted acceleration, that is, it must have a clear attainable objective stated in the ILP.

4.4.3 Accelerated progression is a placement process, not an educational program. Schools should ensure that, whether gifted and talented students are accelerated, or left with age peers, they have a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

4.4.4 Accelerative practices do not immediately require the placement of a student ahead of their age cohort for all of their learning, that is, ahead of an entire year. Indeed, it is more common to find that giftedness relates to one or some areas of cognitive development, relatively rarely across an entire spectrum or age cohort of learning. Accelerative practices through individualised programs can offer enrichment options, while out of school opportunities also provide additional alternatives for the education of a specifically gifted student.

4.5 Early entry

4.5.1 To gain approval for early entry into preschool or kindergarten the Director responsible for early learning first considers the written evidence presented. This may include subjective and objective indicators, teacher/parent nomination/checklists, interview transcripts, anecdotal evidence and student work.

4.5.2 From this evidence the Director decides if early entry into either preschool or kindergarten, is an option to be considered. An educational and psychological assessment conducted by a registered psychologist may be required before a final decision can be made.

4.5.3 The final decision about whether to grant early entry into preschool or kindergarten will be made after consideration of the child's intellectual capacity, academic readiness and socio-emotional maturity.

4.6 Other programs and strategies for gifted and talented students

4.6.1 Schools and school clusters should also consider strategies for meeting the needs of gifted and talented students outside the school. These strategies include programs where students engage in extra-curricular and supplementary learning activities such as: working with a mentor; working with a visual or performance artist to encourage performing or artistic giftedness; seminars; excursions; camps and programs at tertiary institutions.

5 POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Parents or caregivers are encouraged to:

- support their child to pursue excellence, develop mastery and become an independent learner
- provide a supportive learning environment at home that complements the school curriculum
- liaise with teachers, principals and other members of the school's decision-making team to identify the student's giftedness and ensure that the student has appropriate and ongoing educational opportunities.

5.2 Teachers have responsibility for nominating students for identification as gifted, matching the program to meet the needs of the students and providing an appropriately differentiated curriculum.

5.3 School Counsellors and/or psychologists have responsibility to assist the school principal, as part of a team, with the identification, planning and support for gifted and talented students.

- 5.4 Principals with the support of their school staff have responsibility for encouraging gifted students to pursue excellence, become independent learners and develop talent in their domains of giftedness. Principals have responsibility through their school boards to their school communities for the accountability, transparency and implementation of this policy. This includes implementing and monitoring the policy, providing a supportive learning environment, fostering collaborative home-school partnerships and evaluating programs employed within the school.
- 5.5 Central office, together with principals is responsible for strengthening the capacity of staff and collecting ongoing data to ensure all students, including gifted and talented students, achieve to their potential.
- 5.6 School Network Leaders have responsibility for ensuring that schools adequately and appropriately provide for gifted and talented students. In consultation with school principals, School Network Leaders have final responsibility for the acceleration of gifted and talented students between sectors (i.e. primary to high, or high school to college).
- 5.7 The Director responsible for early learning considers applications for early entry to preschool or kindergarten for gifted students.
- 5.8 Central office provides advice, support and professional learning opportunities for teachers and principals to support schools to implement this policy. Central office also ensures currency of the policy within the context of national and international practices for gifted and talented education.

6 POLICY OWNER

Director, Learning and Teaching

7 RELATED POLICIES

Enrolment in ACT Public Schools (Preschool to Year 12)

Attachment 1: Gifted and Talented Education Identification Flowchart

