

POLICY

STATEMENT

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GIFTED CHILDREN

AND STUDENTS

FOREWORD

This policy provides direction and guidance for education and children's services on the education of gifted children and students. It requires curriculum to be extended and enriched and encourages development of a range of appropriate strategies including early entry to school and accelerated progression through school levels.

Support materials for the implementation of this policy have also been produced. These will be developed further as community consultation occurs.

This policy supports the achievement of high quality educational outcomes by all gifted children and students regardless of their social, cultural and linguistic background, disability, gender, socio-economic circumstances and location.

We want all of our students to achieve at the highest possible level and this policy provides a framework for the further achievement of excellence in our schools.

Denis Ralph
Chief Executive

RATIONALE

Children and students with exceptional abilities are likely to be present in all educational settings. They require challenges which match their abilities. While they have often been perceived as being capable of high achievement without assistance, gifted children and students are in fact at risk of not fulfilling their potential if they are not identified and if their talents and skills are not nurtured.

Personnel in schools and children's services must take appropriate steps to meet these children's needs.

Acknowledging and providing appropriate educational settings is essential if children and students with exceptional abilities are to realise their full potential.

To ensure that gifted children and students reach their full potential, certain issues need to be addressed. These include:

- social or cultural bias against high ability and high achievement
- stereotyped assumptions determining which talents or gifts are valued
- lack of access to appropriately challenging educational experiences
- failure to identify students' exceptional potential, especially when it is masked by special needs in other areas - notably disability, poverty, isolation, gender, non-English speaking background and Aboriginality. Lack of motivation, under-achievement and behavioural difficulties can also influence the identification of a student's exceptional potential.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Department for Education and Children's Services will ensure that gifted children and students are identified and receive specific educational attention. A 'gifted'¹ child or student will possess, to an outstanding degree, demonstrated ability or potential in one or more of the following areas:

- general intelligence
- specific academic areas
- visual and performing arts
- psychomotor ability
- leadership
- creative thinking
- interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

Appropriate intervention by the family, community, schools and children's services can help a gifted child or student to reach full potential.

1 The term 'gifted' is used to refer to individuals with high potential. The term 'gifted and talented' is also commonly used.

POLICY OUTCOMES

The Department for Education and Children's Services is committed to the following outcomes:

1. Gifted individuals are provided with opportunities to realise their potential.

The major purpose of education is to develop every child's potential. If gifted children and students are to reach their full potential, then their diverse cognitive, emotional, physical and social needs need to be addressed.

2. Gifted individuals are identified as early as possible.

If an appropriate and challenging program is to be developed for gifted children and students, then the identification process has to be ongoing since giftedness may not be apparent at all stages of a child's development. A range of criteria and a balance of objective and subjective assessment procedures need to be used. These include:

- observation of performance
- parent observation
- peer observation
- checklists of traits and characteristics
- cumulative school history
- anecdotal evidence
- interviews
- interest survey
- standardised achievement tests
- tests of cognitive/ intellectual ability
- teacher devised tests.

When identifying gifted children and students, the following factors should also be considered:

- the perceived need of some students to conform in order to gain peer acceptance
- social and behavioural difficulties
- the fear of taking risks
- the lack of motivation to achieve in school-related tasks
- poor self concept
- inappropriate curriculum
- poor work habits and attitudes

- sex role expectations.

3. Gifted individuals have equality of educational opportunities

Every community has gifted children and students. There may be individuals or groups who require specific support in order to achieve their full potential. The Department for Education and Children's Services will ensure that services are accessible for these gifted individuals or groups.

4. Gifted individuals have appropriate and ongoing educational opportunities

A range of options needs to be available to meet the diverse needs of gifted children and students. Generally, the higher the level of giftedness, the greater will be the need to make special provisions. Options may include:

- placement in vertically grouped/ composite classes
- acceleration through a subject or year level
- participation in extension courses
- provision of compacted curriculum
- clubs and competitions
- mentor programs
- flexible timetabling
- flexible entry into all levels of education
- provision of support for gifted children with specific learning difficulties.

5. Gifted individuals have a differentiated educational curriculum

Differentiation involves adapting the curriculum to enable gifted students to pursue studies at greater depth, and generally at a faster pace. This is negotiated to meet their particular and diverse needs. Although all children can benefit, differentiation is essential for gifted children because it makes the curriculum more complex and challenging for them.

Strategies for achieving a differentiated curriculum include:

- providing curriculum content that is broadly based and related to themes or issues
- integrating multiple disciplines into an area of study
- allowing for students' in-depth learning of a self-selected topic within an area of study
- providing learning activities to encourage development of:
 - abstract and higher order thinking skills
 - independent thinking and open inquiry

- problem solving skills
- research skills
- self understanding
- presenting ideas and products that challenge existing ideas
- focusing on open-ended tasks
- encouraging resource-based learning
- evaluating outcomes through a range of measures which may include appraisal by self or peers, observation, performance, products, criterion-referenced and / or standardised testing
- providing appropriate enrichment and extension activities.

6. Gifted individuals interact with an appropriate peer group.

The department is committed to the use of the following strategies, where appropriate, to promote opportunities for gifted children and students to be accepted by, and interact with, appropriate peer groups. Grouping of these children and students by chronological age may not always be appropriate. Alternatives are:

- clusters of gifted children and students
- interest groups
- gender groups
- focus groups for particular learning areas
- individual and small group learning programs.

7. Accelerative measures and flexible entry into all levels of education are available to gifted individuals.

Gifted children and students may have learning needs requiring a faster pace of study. The level of giftedness provides a guide to the degree of acceleration necessary. Accelerative measures can include:

- subject acceleration
- year level acceleration
- flexible entry to all levels of education.

To ensure smooth transitions, the learner's current and future educators will need to plan cooperatively. Acceleration is more likely to be successful if additional assistance is provided for the student in order to address any gaps in learning.

8. Gifted individual's learning outcomes improve when teachers and other personnel have appropriate training in gifted education.

A number of skills are specific to the teaching and support of gifted children and students. Teachers need training programs to develop their skills in identifying and providing appropriate educational programs. Training programs may include inservice courses, graduate certificate and degree courses.

9. Parents and other appropriate community members have opportunities to be involved in the education of gifted individuals.

It is desirable for parents to be actively involved and to participate in catering for the needs of gifted children and students. Parents are their children's first and most influential educators. They therefore have a unique knowledge and understanding of their children. Parents and community members have expertise, interests and skills which can enrich the life of a school or centre. Their involvement can broaden the range of options available for gifted students and children through community involvement activities, mentor programs and the involvement of tertiary institutions.

10. Gifted individuals have access to counselling and vocational services.

Consultation with a school counsellor, psychologist or other professional with knowledge in the area of gifted education may be necessary for the social and emotional well being of gifted children and students.

POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities of managers

[Managers include school principals, preschool directors, district superintendents and managers of all units and divisions within DECS.]

Managers will:

- foster and support collaborative links with government and non-government agencies, neighbouring education and care settings, tertiary institutions, parent groups and the wider community
- provide access to training and development programs for staff
- provide access to a range of educational options for gifted children and students which may include early enrolment, subject or year level acceleration, vertical and composite classes and the clustering of gifted students

- support parent participation by providing information and encouraging their involvement in planning and implementing programs
- ensure that ongoing evaluation and documentation of programs occurs
- ensure counselling services are available when necessary.

Responsibilities of teachers

Teachers will:

- provide a supportive and challenging learning environment which responds to the intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs of gifted children and students
- enhance their professional knowledge and skills with respect to the identification of children and students with exceptional abilities
- provide an appropriate and challenging learning program which incorporates a variety of teaching strategies relevant to the specific learning styles of gifted individuals
- monitor and evaluate their programs and practices to ensure that the specific and individual needs of these children and students are met
- evaluate student outcomes by using a range of subjective and objective measures
- encourage and support gifted children and students to achieve their personal best and to become independent learners capable of sharing responsibility for their learning programs
- provide parents/ caregivers with the relevant information which will enable them to have the opportunity to be fully supportive in the educational partnership.