



POSITION PAPER: GROUPING

It is the position of the New Mexico Association for the Gifted (NMAG) that gifted students should be grouped with their intellectual peers for significant parts of the school day in both general education and gifted education settings to provide them opportunities to interact with others who have similar intellectual and emotional experiences and responses. Grouped Educational opportunities are needed to nurture them socially as well as ensure their highest academic and intellectual development.

Grouping is the practice of matching students by shared characteristics such as age, ability, need, and/or interest in order to make teaching and learning more effective. Grouping allows for more appropriate pacing and complexity in instruction, which matches the rapidly developing skills and capabilities of gifted students. It allows for social interactions that support the social and emotional needs of gifted students. NMSBA scores are now provided to the schools by grade, not by teacher. If students are grouped, it gives the gifted teacher a better opportunity to impact the students during their general education time as well as the pull-out service.

To advance academically, students need to be challenged and stimulated by the other students in their classes. Gifted students interact with each other to engage in a demanding, active learning process. Gifted students need such opportunities with students at their intellectual level so that they can advance academically at a rate and pace commensurate with their abilities. Interaction with their intellectual peers gives them the challenge and support they deserve.

In addition, the social and emotional needs of gifted students demand that they interact with their intellectual peers. Because the thought processes of gifted students are significantly advanced, they often feel alienated and lonely at school. Their vocabulary, humor, issues, and concerns usually differ markedly from their age peers. This reinforces their feelings of being odd and different, which can lead them at an early age to doubt their worth, deny their talents, and even become depressed. The result may be underachievement, loss of potential, and an increase in conformist behavior, both socially and academically. Intellectual risk-taking, especially among gifted girls, dramatically declines during adolescence without the support of intellectual peers. For students who are highly or profoundly gifted, these effects are even more pronounced.

Strong research evidence supports the effectiveness of ability grouping for gifted students in accelerated classes, enrichment programs, advanced placement programs, and other educational settings. It is an accepted and effective practice that is used extensively in the education programs in almost every country in the western world. NMAG affirms the importance of grouping for instruction of gifted students.



Resources

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The Importance of Cluster Grouping. Coleman, Mary Ruth *Gifted Child Today Magazine*, v18 n1, p38-40, Jan-Feb 1995 ISSN: 1076-2175

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