

The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model

How to Challenge Gifted Students and Improve Achievement for All



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What is The SCGM and why should we consider it?



The SCGM is a method for providing full-time gifted education services without major budget implications, and with potential to raise achievement for all students.

With the SCGM, all students are purposely placed into classrooms based on their abilities, potential, or achievement.

Differences Between The Bright Child & The Gifted Learner

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Knows the answers ■ Is interested / alert ■ Has good ideas ■ Works hard ■ Answers the questions ■ Top group ■ Listens with interest & opinions ■ Learns with ease ■ 6-8 repetitions for mastery ■ Understands ideas ■ Enjoys peers ■ Grasps the meaning ■ Completes assignments ■ Is receptive ■ Copies accurately ■ Enjoys school ■ Absorbs information ■ Technician ■ Enjoys straightforward, sequential learning ■ Is pleased with own learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asks the questions ■ Is highly curious / Is keen ■ Has wild, silly ideas ■ Plays around, yet tests well ■ Discusses in detail, elaborates ■ Beyond the group ■ Shows strong feelings and sensitivities ■ Already knows ■ 1-2 repetitions for mastery ■ Constructs abstractions ■ Prefers adults ■ Draws inferences ■ Initiates projects ■ Is intense ■ Creates a new design ■ Enjoys learning ■ Manipulates information ■ Inventor ■ Thrives on complexity ■ Is highly self-critical J. Szabos Robbins |
|---|---|

Gifted children typically...

- Are intensely curious and have many interests
- Process information with great speed and deep understanding
- Remember forever what they learn
- Readily grasp underlying principles and make generalizations
- Are highly sensitive
- Prefer to work alone
- Relate well with older students and adults
- Demonstrate advanced sense of humor
- Require little direction
- Sustain long periods of attention and concentration



**These behaviors apply to all content areas, all day long.*

What are the learning needs of gifted students?

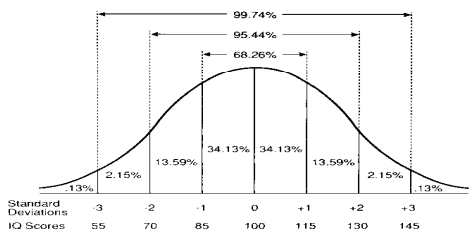
All students deserve consistent opportunities to learn new material.



Since the term “gifted” implies learning and working above age level expectations, in order to **learn**, they need consistent opportunities to engage in advanced educational experiences

How does giftedness impact students’ academic, social, and emotional needs?

Figure 1
The Normal Distribution of IQ Scores



Scanné de : "SENSE AND NONSENSE ABOUT IQ"
Charles LUCURTO - Ed. Praeger (NY) 1991 - Page 5

RTI and Gifted Education

- For struggling learners, the protocol is to: diagnose the learning entry point, prescribe an experience to move the learner forward, apply the intervention, assess its efficacy and.....

Repeat the process

Gifted students need exactly the same experience!

The SCGM allows schools to employ...

The critical elements of effective gifted programs:

- ✓ flexible grouping
- ✓ differentiation
- ✓ continuous progress
- ✓ intellectual peer interaction
- ✓ continuity
- ✓ teachers with specialized education

Program elements identified by Barbara Clark

What does it mean to place students into cluster groups?

A group of gifted identified students is clustered into a mixed ability classroom with a teacher who is trained to differentiate for gifted students.



Suggested classroom composition

30 students in 3 classes	Gifted	High Average	Average	Low Average	Far Below Average
A	6	0	12	12	0
B	0	6	12	6	6
C	0	6	12	6	6

How does the SCGM fit with other inclusion models?

The two models are totally compatible.

For ease of scheduling and to ensure that students receive appropriate instruction by properly trained teachers, schools commonly cluster special education students according to the services they require.

The SCGM replicates this model for gifted students.

Isn't cluster grouping the same as tracking?

No. In tracking, students are grouped into classrooms with others of comparable ability and remain together throughout their school years. Curriculum is based on the ability levels of the students in each track.

When clustered, all classes have a range of abilities. Teachers modify or extend grade level standards according to the students' needs and abilities. The classroom composition changes each year.

Why should gifted students be placed in a cluster group instead of being assigned to all classes?

Gifted students...

- need to spend time learning with others of like ability to experience challenge and make academic progress
- better understand their learning differences when they are with learning peers



✓ *Teachers are more likely to differentiate curriculum when there is a **group** of gifted students with similar learning needs.*

Can I create small groups of gifted students in all classes?



No: the desired outcomes of the SCGM become diminished when doing so because:

- there is less accountability for teachers to facilitate progress of their gifted learners
- teachers feel a decreased need to identify gifted students
- providing appropriate teacher training becomes difficult

✓ *All classes still have the full range of abilities!*

Won't the creation of a cluster group rob the other classes of academic leadership?

- With either gifted or high achieving students in every class, all classes have academic leaders
- Gifted students do not make the best academic leaders because they make intuitive leaps, and therefore do not always appear to have to work as hard as others
- High average students have new opportunities to become academic leaders



Aren't gifted students needed in all classes so they can help others learn?



Helping other students learn is not the responsibility of gifted students, and they are usually *not* very good at it! They make better dictators than coaches! Did you ever know a parent who sent their child to school to be the teacher??

The SCGM enfranchises *all* gifted students...



- *Creatively gifted people*
- *Gifted Perfectionists*
- *Culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students*
- *Twice-exceptional gifted students*
- *Non-productive gifted students*



What are some advantages of cluster grouping?

- Grouping *all* gifted children in a regular classroom provides social, emotional, and academic advantages to students
- Teachers can focus instruction to better meet all students academic needs
- Schools provide full-time gifted services with few additional costs
- Achievement levels increase **for entire grade levels**

What are possible challenges when cluster grouping?

- Parental pressure to place children who have not been identified as gifted into the gifted cluster classroom
- Placing students when enrolling during the school year
- Making sure that compacting and differentiation are consistently occurring in the gifted cluster classes

Benefits of The SCGM include:

- Challenging gifted students every day, all day
- Creating learning and leadership opportunity for *all* students
- Empowering all teachers by expanding awareness and providing preparation
- On-going assessment of students' strengths and needs
- All students share opportunities for extended learning

The SCGM: Achievement Implications

- Narrowed range of abilities allows for more focused instruction
 - Teachers learn strategies for advanced ability learners they can use for all students, not just the gifted students
 - On-going assessment of students' strengths and needs ensures continual progress
 - Gifted students are more likely to receive advanced instruction and extended learning opportunities
 - Not all student are working on the same material at the same time
- ✓ *Higher expectations for all students!*



Staffing The SCGM



- Gifted Cluster Teacher at every grade
- Gifted Specialist/Mentor at every school
- Gifted Coordinator/Director at district level

Effective Gifted Cluster Teachers...

- Understand, respect, and enjoy teaching gifted students
- Strongly support inclusion
- Decrease use of whole group instruction
- Encourage student-centered approach to learning
- Participate in professional development



Cluster Teacher training topics:

- Understand and know how to implement the SCGM
- Recognize gifted potential in all populations
- Pay attention to students' social/emotional needs
- Identify students who need learning accommodations
- Compact and differentiate
- Form flexible learning groups
- Integrate basic skills and higher order thinking skills
- Create and use learning extensions and tiered lessons
- Use appropriate assessments and grading practices
- Develop student's abilities to self-direct
- Build effective parent/teacher partnerships

For a supportive school culture...

- Carefully balance the classrooms according to students' abilities
- Provide information to teachers and parents
- Build a cooperative partnership between school and home
- Invite all teachers to participate in professional development opportunities



Parent information

- Provide office staff with information
- Gifted cluster teachers send out letters describing differentiated learning opportunities in the classroom
- Prepare a brochure with FAQ's about cluster grouping
- Hold informational evenings for parents of gifted students

The SCGM in times of lean budgets

Full-time gifted services are provided with:

- No initial outlay of funds needed
- No additional staffing
- No extra materials required
- Desirable staff development that benefits all students
- Retaining students in the district

The Cluster Grouping Handbook
Free Spirit Publishing www.freespirit.com

This book contains a CD that includes a full presentation on the SCGM model for use with your school and other community members



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