

Implementation Strategies for the **Education of** **Gifted and Talented Students**



Foreword

The Department of School Education identifies and develops gifts and talents among its students.

This policy and the associated implementation strategies, developed through extensive consultation over the past years, specify responsibilities and provide guidance for teachers, schools, regions and the central executive of the NSW Department of School Education.

The new policy is more comprehensive and flexible than its predecessor. It encourages teachers and school communities to extend and enrich the curriculum to challenge gifted and talented students. It encourages the continuing development of appropriate strategies including early entry to school and accelerated progression. There will be ongoing community consultation regarding the implementation of the policy particularly in relation to strategies such as the provision for early entry into schools.

Programs to realise the full potential of gifted and talented young people must be balanced and implemented in a manner appropriate to the needs of the individual.

The NSW Department of School Education Policy for *the Education of Gifted and Talented Students*, aims to achieve educational equity and high quality outcomes for all gifted and talented students, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic or socio-cultural backgrounds, and to ensure that these students are extended and enriched throughout their schooling.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denis Ralph". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Denis W Ralph
Acting Director-General of School Education
November, 1991

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Rationale

This policy statement complements the *NSW Government Strategy for The Education of Gifted and Talented Students*. The overall aim of the policy is to maximise the educational outcomes of schooling for gifted and talented students.

Government schools have a responsibility to educate all students to their full potential. The policy adopts the definitions of gifted and talented articulated in the NSW Government statement.

Gifted students are those with the potential to exhibit superior performance across a range of areas of endeavour.

Talented students are those with the potential to exhibit superior performance in one area of endeavour.

It is critical for gifted and talented students to be given appropriate opportunity, stimulation and the experiences to develop their potential and satisfy their learning needs. Special emphasis will also be given to identifying those students whose gifts and talents may have been previously overlooked.

Gifted and talented students are to be found in all communities regardless of their socio-cultural or socio-economic backgrounds

It is important for teachers to be sensitive to factors which can help or hinder the recognition and development of special gifts and talents in young people.

These factors are: **motivation, self esteem, peer pressure, socio-economic, socio-cultural, linguistic and disability.**

Giftedness and talent may occur in many different areas including the creative arts, academic subjects, social and leadership skills and sporting interests. Opportunities for students to achieve their full potential should be provided as a matter of daily routine. Such opportunities may be created within a class, among groups of classes or schools, or by regionally or centrally-designed programs and initiatives.

Policy Statement

This policy statement recognises that decision making in relation to provisions for gifted and talented students is a complex and interactive process.

School principals, in full consultation with parents, teachers, counsellors and other appropriate personnel, have the prime responsibility for decisions in relation to the education of gifted and talented students.

1. School communities have a responsibility to identify their gifted and talented students.

2. School communities have a responsibility to provide a range of opportunities for their gifted and talented students.

2.1 School Principals have the final responsibility for deciding when the **early entry** to school of students who are intellectually gifted and talented is appropriate to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

2.2 School Principals have the final responsibility for deciding when any form of **accelerated progression** is appropriate for individual gifted and talented students in Years K-12 to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

3. Teachers have a responsibility to identify the gifted and talented students in their classes.

4. Teachers have a responsibility to select a variety of teaching strategies for inclusion in programs for the range of gifted and talented students in their classes.

5. Regions and schools have a responsibility to coordinate school provisions for gifted and talented students when it is feasible for more than one school to share this responsibility.

6. Regions and schools have a responsibility to provide staff development opportunities for principals, teachers and other appropriate school personnel in the education of *gifted* and *talented* students.

7. The Director-General and the Central Executive have a responsibility to account for the implementation of this policy and to report on the outcomes of schooling for *gifted* and *talented* students in NSW Government schools.

This policy statement must be read in conjunction with the NSW *Government Strategy for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students*

POLICY STATEMENT 1

School communities have a responsibility to identify their gifted and talented students.

Implementation strategies

1.1 Schools will develop methods for the identification of their gifted and talented students.

These methods are to be made known to members of the school community,

1.2 A wide range of methods is needed to ensure that all students who are gifted and/or talented are identified. There are many reasons why gifted and talented students may be difficult to identify. They may be:

- students from non-English-speaking backgrounds
- Aboriginal students
- students disadvantaged by gender inequity
- socio-economically disadvantaged students
- students with physical and/or sensory disabilities
- students with specific learning difficulties
- students diagnosed as intellectually disabled
- isolated students
- conduct-disordered students.

1.3 The identification process must:

- be school-wide
- be organised
- be dynamic and continuous
- be justifiable
- allow for early identification
- ensure that identification of students from disadvantaged and minority populations is not overlooked
- ensure that all areas of giftedness and talent are identified
- allow for the development of competence in English as a second language among students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

1.4 The school should recognise that certain factors may inhibit the expression of giftedness or talents:

- students may actively disguise their giftedness and talents to seek peer acceptance and thereby avoid identification
- students may actively disguise their giftedness and talents to avoid appearing different students may lack motivation to achieve in school-oriented tasks
- students belonging to those groups identified in 1.2 may need intervention programs which enable their giftedness and talent to flourish
- parents may be reluctant to acknowledge or may be unaware that their child is gifted or talented

1.5 Schools may seek the support of Regional Gifted and Talented Students Committees and other regional networks in providing:

- means appropriate for recognising creativity as well as general ability
- performance and behavioural indicators to assist teachers to recognise gifted and talented students in a variety of areas
- structures which encourage gifted and talented students to work together in a variety of educational contexts.

POLICY STATEMENT 2

School communities have a responsibility to provide a range of opportunities for their gifted and talented students.

Implementation strategies

- 2.1 Schools' policies should evolve through implementing and documenting effective school procedures for the education of gifted and talented students.
- 2.2 Schools should identify a person or persons responsible for the implementation of the policy for gifted and talented students in their schools.
- 2.3 A school committee with appropriate representation should be identified. The principal will decide if issues related to confidentiality or working procedures may affect the committee's composition.

The school's responsibilities include:

- ensuring that awareness is raised among the staff regarding the needs of gifted and talented students
- helping individual teachers to meet the needs of gifted and talented students in all key learning areas
- developing and overseeing the school's programs
- monitoring the school's programs as a basis for making improvements and reporting achievements
- establishing and maintaining liaison with parents
- ensuring that the procedures for placing individual gifted and talented students in specific programs are operating effectively
- identifying and managing the resources necessary for program implementation
- identifying the needs for professional development and making recommendations to the school's staff development committee or coordinator
- identifying and establishing, where appropriate, links with other schools (Government and non-Government), other educational institutions, community groups, service organisations, cultural and sporting bodies, business communities, and professional organisations. These links may form a basis for mentor programs, enrichment opportunities, broader educational perspectives or initiatives, and sponsorships.

2.4 Whole-school provisions could include:

- **Mentor Programs** - these programs link individual students with community members who have expertise in particular areas. Schools can approach their Regional Gifted and Talented Students Committee to seek the assistance of mentors.
- **Acceleration** - students who achieve curriculum outcomes more quickly than their p
- **Vertical Grouping** - this may involve bringing together gifted and talented students of different ages with others who have similar abilities, interests and aptitudes.
- **Gifted and Talented Students Camps** - these bring together students, teachers and community members working together to develop students' gifts and talents.

2.5 Schools may form their own full-time or part-time classes or join with other schools in the region, for enrichment or acceleration programs.

This may include provision of special programs whereby schools may develop in-class or additional extension and enrichment programs for identified students. Tutorial classes would be an example of such a program.

6.3 Centres of Excellence, opportunity classes, selective and specialist secondary schools cater for gifted and talented students.

POLICY STATEMENT 3

Teachers have a responsibility to identify the gifted and talented students in their classes.

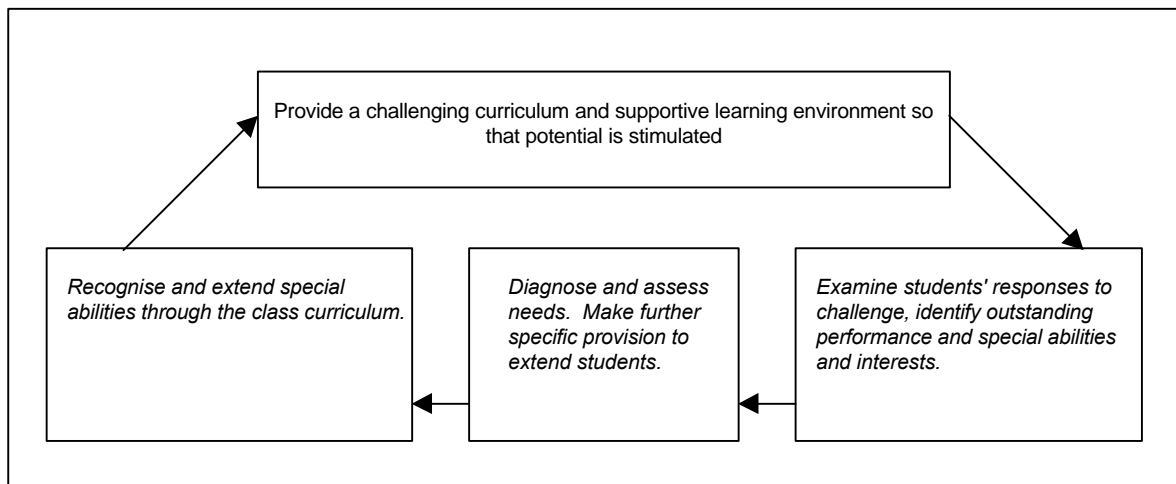
Implementation strategies

3.1 The classroom teacher is to be aware of a variety of methods of identifying gifted and talented students.

The classroom teacher may initiate the identification of gifted and talented students.

Identification is an integral part of the teacher's process of recognising student differences. It is fundamental for devising a stimulating and challenging class program.

The diagram below illustrates a classroom process for identifying and providing for gifted and talented students.



Reference: Extending children's special abilities, Ministry of Education, Victoria 1986

3.2 Teachers in consultation with parents, school counsellors and other appropriate personnel, should use a diverse combination of methods for judging student performance and potential.

Methods should be selected on the basis of age and/ or the particular ability to be assessed. These may include: anecdotal records, interviews, products and performance, class grades, behavioural checklists and standardised tests of creative and general ability.

3.3 Any student may be nominated for placement in a specific program by teachers, parents, peers, or, where appropriate, by the individual student.

POLICY STATEMENT 4

Teachers have a responsibility to select a variety of teaching strategies for inclusion in the programs for the range of gifted and talented students in their classes.

Implementation strategies

4.1 To encourage high achievement, originality, problem-solving, higher order thinking skills and creativity, teachers should consider the individual needs of the gifted and talented students in their classes.

4.2 A variety of teaching/ learning strategies may be considered.

Teachers can:

- give opportunities for students to initiate discussion and to think creatively
- guide students through a range of problem-solving processes
- pose open-ended questions, activities and assignments
- use group work, allowing scope for leadership, cooperative decision making and student -initiated perspectives
- make use of contract work, with students negotiating the contract components
- encourage individual research
- provide opportunities for peer tutoring
- involve mentors who are community members with specific expertise
- introduce individualised enrichment programs
- extend the curriculum

POLICY STATEMENT 5

Regions and schools have a responsibility to coordinate school provisions for gifted and talented students when it is feasible for more than one school to share this responsibility.

Implementation strategies

- 5.1 Each region will nominate a senior officer who will have responsibility for the education of gifted and talented students as a part of a statement of duties.
- 5.2 This officer will chair a regional committee which develops and oversees regional plans made in response to schools' needs regarding gifted and talented students. The regional committee should include representatives from:
 - primary schools
 - secondary schools
 - school counsellors
 - tertiary institutions
 - parent groups
 - community members.
- 5.3 The regional committee may assist with the provision of links between schools, and between schools and outside agencies, to support programs that cannot feasibly be provided by an individual school, e.g. mentor programs and out-of-school-hours programs.
- 5.4 Problems of distance in country regions may necessitate the formation of alternative co-ordination mechanisms.
- 5.5 Educational provisions for gifted and talented students will be included in regional management plans.
- 5.6 Regions are to develop strategies to respond to schools' requests for support in identifying gifted and talented students, and in providing programs for gifted and talented students.

POLICY STATEMENT 6

Regions and schools have a responsibility to provide staff development opportunities for teachers and other appropriate school personnel in the education of gifted and talented students.

Implementation strategies

6.1 Regions and schools should provide:

- teacher and parent support networks
- professional development courses in response to the identified needs of students, schools and teachers.

6.2 Regions and schools should ensure that, by the end of 1993, all staff members will have had the opportunity to participate in at least one professional development course in the education of gifted and talented students.

6.3 Assistant Directors-General (Regions) may approve requests from schools wishing to use the merit selection process for the appointment of teachers with expertise in the education of gifted and talented students. Schools should seek to employ by 1995 at least one teacher who has qualifications gained through either training or experience in the education of gifted and talented students.

POLICY STATEMENT 7

The Director-General and the Central Executive have a responsibility to account for the implementation of Government Policy and to report on the outcomes of schooling for gifted and talented students in NSW Government schools.

Implementation strategies

7.1 The Director-General will nominate a senior officer to have responsibility for policy on the education of gifted and talented students.

7.2 On matters related to the education of gifted and talented students in Government schools the Director-General and the Central Executive will:

- provide representation on government policy and advisory committees
- advise the Government
- liaise with the Board of Studies
- communicate with interstate, Commonwealth and international bodies
- consult with key parent and community groups, professional associations and tertiary institutions.

ACCELERATION AND THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

Implementation Strategies

In order to meet the educational needs of gifted and talented students effectively, schools should consider using a range of provisions. Acceleration is one way of providing for gifted and talented students.

Acceleration is any strategy which allows students to progress more quickly than their age peers. It usually involves changes in school organisation and in the curriculum. Counselling provisions for accelerated students are necessary.

Some students are accelerated learners. They have cognitive abilities which allow them to learn much more quickly than their age peers. Acceleration programs are a response to the needs of these learners.

Accelerated learners who have access to the acceleration provision have the opportunity to reach a higher level of understanding and performance in a subject, or to undertake studies and activities at a higher grade or level.

The following types of acceleration may provide for the educational needs of gifted and talented students:

Content acceleration

This type of acceleration permits each student to progress in a subject or content area at the rate that best suits the student's ability and current performance. It may occur in primary or secondary school and take any of the following forms:

(a) *Individual progression*

This can take place through:

- individualised work (e.g. the use of contracts or modules, independent study)
- classroom grouping practices (e.g. students may be grouped in primary or secondary classes according to ability and permitted to proceed at their own pace; contracts or modules of work may be employed)
- vertical grouping (or family grouping) in which individual progression is possible.

(b) *Enrichment*

Some forms of enrichment are equivalent to acceleration, i.e. when they provide for advanced content, higher order thinking skills and/or advanced performance.

Year (or Grade) Acceleration

There are two types of year acceleration:

(a) *Early Entry*

Some young children who are intellectually gifted may be enrolled in Kindergarten early. Similarly, some students may obtain early entry to secondary school or tertiary institutions.

(b) *Grade (Year) Skipping*

Some students who are well advanced in several aspects of their work may 'skip a grade'. (Board of Studies documents *, and syllabus documents describe the expectations related to students' learning outcomes which will guide teachers in assessing a student's performance.)

Implications of acceleration

As a result of some forms of acceleration, students may undertake a range of other studies in greater depth, including:

- an extra school subject (e.g. elective courses)
- an integrated 'thematic' subject
- a secondary subject by distance education
- a tertiary subject by distance education or by part-time on campus study at a tertiary institution
- independent study
- time out for an overseas or Australian exchange
- early entry to study at a tertiary institution.

• *Curriculum Requirements for NSW Schools*, Board of Studies, NSW, July 1991
• *Guidelines for Accelerated Progression*, Board of Studies, NSW, July 1991

School considerations about acceleration

The implementation of an acceleration program has implications for teaching and counselling across the whole school. The following issues need to be considered:

1. A **total school policy** is required.

Any changes made in one year may have implications for the whole school. In accelerating students' learning, consideration must be made of the effects in subsequent years. School staff and parents need to have common understanding about why and how acceleration occurs in the school.

2. Student's **social and emotional development** is a major factor.

While a student's academic performance is a key factor in considering any type of acceleration, the student's social and emotional development must also be carefully considered.

3. **Counselling** is required.

Gifted students whose accelerated program places them in a different age cohort or a different location (e.g. a withdrawal program) should be counselled about the reasons for, and implications of, the new placement and should have the opportunity to return to their previous situation if necessary.

4. **Qualitatively different** work should be offered.

If acceleration simply results in additional amounts of work, it may be entirely counter productive. There should be a corresponding modification in the quality of work so that it:

- entails more advanced concepts
- stimulates higher order thinking skills (i.e. entails comparison, value judgements, synthesis, evaluation, and opportunity for reflection and critical analysis).

5. **Research and independent study skills** should be taught.

Acceleration programs may involve problem-solving sessions in small groups or independent study. Accelerated learners must be taught how to locate information, to define problems, to outline aims, to summarise salient points, and to evaluate their own products.

6. **Teaching strategies** may need to be modified.

Teachers may need to modify their teaching strategies when working with gifted students, as they frequently require less explanation, fewer routines, and reduced time for revision. There may be an increased need for discussion, group work, exploration of issues, and an emphasis on 'guidance' rather than on 'direct instruction'.

POLICY STATEMENT 2.1

School principals have the final responsibility for deciding when the early entry to school of students who are intellectually gifted is appropriate to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

Early entry is a placement procedure. This placement should not be considered an educational program. Schools should ensure that an appropriate educational program is available if they decide on this type of student placement.

Educational programs for these students may contain:

- content acceleration to match the students' abilities
- thoughtfully planned, relevant enrichment
- special instruction with the opportunity to work closely with other students of similar levels of ability
- the opportunity to work with mentors who have high levels of expertise

Educational programs may be provided for a group of gifted students so that they study with others of similar levels of ability.

The curriculum for gifted students should be academically rigorous, intellectually stimulating, and sufficiently flexible to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- principals consider children aged four or older (at 31 January of the year of enrolment) as appropriate for early entry
- schools seek appropriate inservice training if it is needed by the teacher of the receiving class
- clusters of schools work together and maintain a bank of information about the management of all aspects of early entry
- each cluster should identify a reference person with early schooling expertise and experience in gifted and talented students' education. This person should be contacted and advise schools regarding alternative options to early entry, These options should be developed through discussion between parents / caregivers, pre-school teachers, primary school teachers, and gifted and talented students committee representatives.
- schools may seek advice from the Regional Gifted and Talented Students Committee when making decisions about early entry, and when planning provisions for these students
- screening should involve the use of measures of performance and potential. These may include: anecdotal records, interviews, standardised tests of cognitive ability and behavioural checklists.
- Each school which accepts a student for early entry will provide information on program and support structures to the senior regional officer with responsibility for gifted and talented students, to enable the establishment of a regional database.

Specific criteria to guide student placement for early entry to primary school

School principals should use these guidelines when determining suitability for early entry to school.

1. When a student is being considered for early entry, the school should carry out a comprehensive psychological evaluation of intellectual functioning, academic skills and social-emotional adjustment. This should be undertaken by a school counsellor or a registered psychologist.
2. Academically, students should demonstrate levels of skill which are well above the average of the class they desire to enter.
3. Judgements about the student's emotional maturity should include input from the student's parents and the school counsellor or psychologist. Some gifted and talented students may have social or emotional problems due to the lack of a compatible peer group. It is important that teachers do not confuse the absence of close peer relationships with social immaturity. Early entry may alleviate such a problem.
4. Ideally, early enrolment should occur at natural entry points, such as the beginning of the school year. However, placement at other times may be desirable where the students previous teacher and the receiving teacher may more easily confer about the best way to help the student to make a smooth transition.
5. A student's physical size, physical or sensory disability should not prohibit early entry to school.
6. Advanced placement should be reviewed after one term. At this time the committee who made the initial decision for early entry should reconvene to evaluate the placement.

Feldhusen, J F, Proctor, T B & Black, K N (1986)

POLICY STATEMENT 2.2

School principals have the final responsibility for deciding when any form of accelerated progression is appropriate for individual gifted and talented students in Years K-12 to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

Accelerated progression is a placement procedure, not an educational program. Schools should ensure that an appropriate educational program is available for all students whose progression is accelerated in one or more subject areas.

Educational programs for accelerated students may contain:

- content acceleration to match the students' abilities
- thoughtfully planned, relevant enrichment
- special instruction with the opportunity to Work closely with other students of similar levels of ability
- the opportunity to work with mentors who have high levels of expertise.

Educational programs may be provided for a group of talented students so that they study with others of similar levels of ability.

The curriculum for gifted students should be academically rigorous, intellectually stimulating and sufficiently flexible to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- clusters of schools work together and share resources and information about the management of the accelerated progression of talented students
- in cases where partial or full acceleration from primary to secondary schools is being considered, close liaison between schools should take place before acceleration is commenced
- schools may seek advice from the Regional Gifted and Talented Students Committee or other regional networks when making decisions about accelerated progression in individual cases and when planning provisions for these students
- schools refer to *Guidelines for Accelerated Progression* (Board of Studies, July, 1991).

Specific criteria to guide student placement for accelerated progression of students K-12

School principals should use these guidelines in determining students' suitability for accelerated progression.

1. When a student is being considered for accelerated progression, the school should carry out a comprehensive psychological evaluation of intellectual functioning, academic skills and social-emotional adjustment. This should be undertaken by a school counsellor or a registered psychologist.
2. Academically, the student should demonstrate levels of skill which are well above the average of the class she or he desires to enter.
3. Judgement about the student's emotional maturity should include input from the student's parents and the school counsellor or psychologist. Gifted students are sometimes rejected by their classmates. It is important that teachers do not confuse the absence of close peer relationships with social immaturity. Principals should be aware that social or emotional difficulties may have been caused by inappropriately low grade placement. In such cases the problem may be alleviated by accelerated progression. Failure to advance a highly gifted student may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation, and poor adjustment.
4. Ideally, accelerated progression should occur at natural entry points, such as the beginning of the school year. However, placement at other times may be desirable where the student's previous teacher and the receiving teacher may more easily confer about the best way to help the student to make a smooth transition.
5. A student's physical size, physical or sensory disability should not prohibit accelerated progression.
6. The accelerated progression should be reviewed. This could take place, for example, after one term. At this time the case committee will reconvene to evaluate the placement and make recommendations about its continuation.

Feldhusen, J F, Proctor, T B & Black, K N (1986)

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6. NSW Ministry of Education, 1991. *Government Strategy for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students*.
7. Victorian Ministry of Education, 1986. *Extending Children's Special Abilities*.