

**Gifted and Talented Policy
Balmain Public School**

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1. Introduction and Context

Gifted students have individual needs that are different from other students and therefore require learning support. This policy is presented as a subsidiary of Balmain Public School's learning support policy.

The purpose of special provisions for gifted children is to respond to their unique needs. Although it is relatively clear that children in every other branch of special education have unique needs, this assumption has not been widely endorsed for the gifted and has to be made clearly explicit.

At Balmain Public School a student's English as an Additional Language/Dialect background, socio-economic status and underachievement due to emotional and socio-affective issues could impact the achievement of a gifted student. It is recommended that an advocate for gifted students sit on the school's learning support committee.

Balmain Public School has two opportunity classes for gifted students, however there are gifted students in **every** classroom.

2. Rationale

This policy statement complements the NSW Department of Education and Communities Policy for Gifted and Talented students (2006). The overall aim is to maximise the educational outcomes of schooling for gifted students. Government schools have a responsibility to identify and cater for gifted students in their school communities. Gifted students are found in all communities regardless of socio-economic, cultural and socio-affective backgrounds.

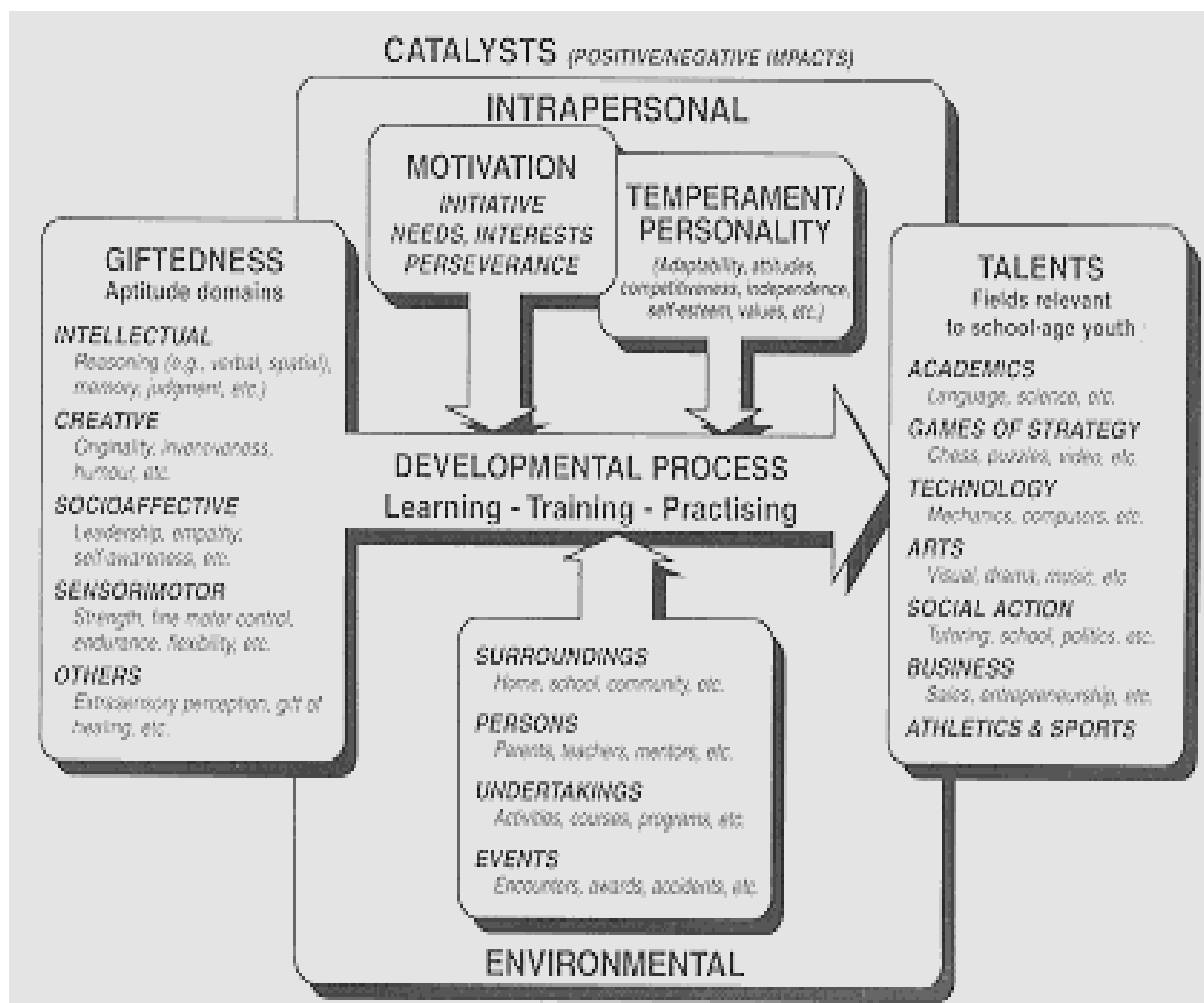
Gifted students have considerably different needs from other students as identified in Gagne's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent in terms of potential and performance. These needs range from the intellectual, social and emotional in gifted students. All students at Balmain Public School should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, including gifted students. Appropriate educational opportunities for those identified as gifted need to be provided throughout the school.

3. Definition

The Department of Education and Communities has adopted Gagne’s Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent, which proposes a clear distinction between the two basic concepts of giftedness and talent.

Giftedness designates the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities (called aptitudes or gifts) in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 5 - 10% of age peers.

Talent designates the superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) and knowledge in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual within at least the top 5-10% of age-peers who are, or have been active in the field(s).



4. Aims

At Balmain Public School we aim to improve educational outcomes for gifted students by:

- Applying appropriate identification procedures
- Making provision through appropriate programs and resources
- Providing a differentiated curriculum in classrooms
- Engaging, effective and ongoing Teacher Professional Learning for all staff
- Developing and maintaining a collaborative and collegial relationship with the whole school community including the families of gifted students
- Creating learning environments where gifted students will feel valued and accepted

5. Identification

The Gifted & Talented policy (DET, 2006) states that procedures for identification should involve parents/caregivers, students, teachers and other professionals. ***The identification procedure must be school wide, be culturally fair, use multiple criteria and recognise degrees of giftedness and talent.***

Identification of gifted children can be a complex and difficult task. It is extremely important to ensure that the procedures used in identifying gifted children are **comprehensive and inclusive**. Some identification procedures have the effect of missing the 'more difficult to see' gifted populations. These include students from low socio-economic, twice exceptional* and minority ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Borland 1994, Piirto 1994). Many of the most commonly used methods of identification will miss the highly gifted (Gross 1994) and gifted underachievers/twice exceptional* (Hall 1983).

**Twice exceptional students have giftedness as well as an additional identified need e.g. Aspergers, processing disorders, emotional or behavioural issues. The disabling issue can mask the giftedness and vice-versa.*

There are two types of identification: *subjective* which encompasses nomination processes and *objective* which encompasses screening processes.

Methods of identification available include (although this list is by no means prescriptive):

SUBJECTIVE

- Teacher/Parent nomination – can be facilitated by the use of checklists e.g. Whitmore for underachievers (teacher use) and Saylor (parent use). Both checklists and others available from Gifted & Talented website, Curriculum Support)
- Peer nomination
- Self-nomination
- Parent/teacher/student conferences
- Anecdotal records

OBJECTIVE:

- Educational assessments through school counsellor or educational psychologist (WPPSI for 2 – 8 year olds and WISC for older children)
- Off-level testing (involves administering tests that are at least one year level above the student's current year level in the subjects that they show potential)
- Standardised testing e.g. Ravens (particularly relevant for EAD/EAL students, PAT, Torch, Haslett scales (particularly relevant for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island students)
- External standardized tests e.g. ICAS competitions, OC placement tests
- Best Start and Gifted & Talented Kindergarten
- School assessment/performance/achievement comparing students across the grade and above the grade

6. Implementation

- Implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the school executive and the Gifted & Talented representative, but all staff members have a responsibility to comply with this policy.
- To ensure whole school ownership this policy needs to be evaluated, updated and ratified by the staff every alternate year.
- Teachers should engage in professional learning in all the aspects of this policy in an ongoing and meaningful manner.
- Tracking of identified students needs to occur each term with the needs of gifted students to be reviewed regularly by the committee.
- Programs and provisions will be monitored and evaluated by parents, staff and students to ensure the best learning outcomes for gifted students.

GROUPING STRATEGIES

At Balmain Public School we believe that the needs of the whole child are paramount. It is also pertinent to note current research that concludes that it is best for gifted children to be grouped together for all or some part of the day. In the context of Balmain Public School's enrolment numbers, some of the strategies that could be adopted to meet this premise include:

- *Cluster grouping*: This is a structure where six or more identified students across the grade are placed in a mixed ability class to facilitate curriculum differentiation and to provide identified students with a peer group. This structure could occur when there is more than one class per year level.

- *Non-graded classrooms*: This can be facilitated by grouping students in stages whether they are in the age-cohort for that stage or not e.g. a seven year old in a Stage 2 class.
- *Full time grouping*: OC classes.
- *Ability grouping*:
 - a) In-class ability grouping – needs to be subject based, well organised and implemented on a daily basis
 - b) Regrouping for specific instruction e.g. maths throughout a Stage level
- *Flexible grouping* based on instructional needs
- *Enrichment groups* and *pull-out programs*

The strategies listed above are flexible and not all of them will operate at any one time in any given year.

TEACHING PRACTICE

Curriculum differentiation should be practised consistently in all classrooms. Curriculum differentiation is modification of the content, process, product and learning environment to suit individual needs. To assess instructional needs, prior knowledge, misconceptions and interest, **pre- testing** should be completed in Key Learning Areas of English, Maths, HSIE and Science to target specific strengths and weaknesses.

POSSIBLE PROGRAMS AND PROVISIONS

- Open-ended inquiry based learning (building on prior knowledge)
- Philosophy with kids
- Opportunity class and selective High School placement tests.
- Regional and state-wide opportunities e.g. debating
- Links with local high schools for enrichment and acceleration purposes
- Special interest projects (in-class) to enhance student engagement

ACCELERATION

Types:

- Early entry to primary and secondary school
- Grade skipping
- Subject acceleration
- Mentoring
- Curriculum compacting
- Secondary school attendance for specific subjects

Accelerated and Early Entry: Accelerated progression is a placement procedure, not an educational program. In accelerated progression and early entry the curriculum for gifted students is academically rigorous, intellectually stimulating and suitably flexible to meet their educational, social and emotional needs.

- The classroom teacher, in consultation with the stage supervisor and the principal will provide evidence supporting the acceleration.
- The school counsellor will carry out a comprehensive psychological evaluation on intellectual functioning, academic skills and socio-emotional adjustment.
- Academically, students should demonstrate levels of skill that are well above the average of the class they desire to enter.
- Judgments about the student's emotional and academic maturity should include input from the student's parents. Some G&T students may have social or emotional problems due to a 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/acceleration may alleviate such a problem.
- Acceleration will occur at a time deemed appropriate by the principal and relevant personnel, but would preferably occur at natural entry points; (the beginning of a school year or school term) for ease of transition. It could also occur initially on a part time basis.
- A student's physical size, physical or sensory disability should not prohibit early entry/ acceleration.
- Placement will be reviewed at the end of each term. At this time the principal and committee who made the initial decision for early entry or acceleration should reconvene to evaluate the placement.

(Refer to 'Guidelines For Accelerated Progression' BOS July 1991)

N.B. These procedures do not need to be put in place for subject acceleration.

References

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