



GROUPING PRACTICES FOR GIFTED LEARNERS



A POSITION PAPER

The California Association for the Gifted (CAG) periodically publishes position papers that deal with issues, policies, and practices that have an impact on the education of gifted and talented students. All position papers approved by the CAG Board of Directors are consistent with the organization's philosophy and mission, and the current research in the field.

The position papers support the organization's belief in the value and uniqueness of all individuals, its respect for diversity present in our society, and its commitment to honoring the similarities and differences among all students. CAG encourages the provision of educational opportunities that are appropriate to challenge and nurture the growth of each child's potential. The organization is especially mindful of the need for advocacy for individuals who have developed or show the promise of developing intellectual abilities and talents at high levels.



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The California Association for the Gifted supports the use of intellectual peer grouping and cross-age grouping as important practices for gifted students. Grade-level or age peers are not necessarily intellectual peers and age is not an effective criterion for academic grouping. Research has shown that gifted students choose more challenging tasks and feel more comfortable about achieving at their level of ability when grouped with others of the same ability level.

Strong research evidence supports the effectiveness of grouping students with others of similar ability levels and finds that this strategy, when used flexibly, elevates the level of challenge and learning for all children. Instruction better meets the needs of all children when it can be tailored to suit the individual child. The practice of grouping enables students with advanced abilities and/or performance to receive suitably challenging instruction. Flexible grouping allows more appropriate, advanced, and accelerated instruction that more closely aligns with the rapidly developing skills and capabilities of gifted students. Gifted children may not be gifted in all academic areas; therefore grouping placements should be flexibly determined.

To facilitate the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and varying levels of English proficiency, it is imperative to seek out methods of assessment that are as varied as the disparate populations. The results then enable children to be placed in the appropriate groupings for their educational experiences.

Cluster grouping, a form of grouping in which a small number of gifted students (usually five to seven) are placed within a heterogeneously grouped classroom, can be used to provide for appropriate differentiation of instruction and content for gifted learners, especially when there are few identified gifted students in the school. Part-time grouping should not be used as the entire program for gifted learners nor as the only opportunity gifted students have to meet their needs. Mixed-ability grouping and cooperative learning are practices that should be used sparingly. Although they may furnish a forum for social interaction, they do not provide a learning environment that broadens and deepens academic advancement.

CAG recommends the flexible grouping of students based on a commonality of the students' intellectual, academic, and/or affective needs at least some part of every school day and believes that ideally such interactions should be scheduled for a major part of the learning experience. Grouping alone cannot provide for the educational



needs of gifted learners. An appropriately modified curriculum must be added to any classroom grouping practice for students to be able to realize their potential.

References:

Kulik, J. A. (1992). *An analysis of the research on ability grouping: Historical and contemporary perspectives*. Storrs, CT: National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

Rogers, K. (1991). *The relationship of grouping practices to the education of the gifted and talented learner*. Storrs, CT: National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.