



Kansas Effective Practices Instructional Toolkit

Implementing Research and Resources Into Action
Research Lesson 4: Opportunities to Socialize & Work With Like-Ability Peers

Grouping Structure

Structure describes placement options for delivering instruction and content extensions appropriate for gifted students within classroom and school environments, Pre-K – 12.

Decisions about structure impact the intensity of gifted interventions and the time gifted students interact with like-ability peers. Research continues to support the like-ability grouping of gifted students. Local districts may use the options for placement for a variety of instructional purposes throughout the calendar year (e.g., daily instruction, summer school, inter-sessions, field trips, mentorships, and Saturday programs). Selecting the appropriate structure is dependent upon the personal characteristics of gifted students and resources of the district/school. In this regard, decision makers must realize that one particular structure may not meet the needs of all gifted students.

Structures for grouping gifted students include:

Classroom with flexible grouping

Flexible grouping options occurring within the whole class are usually teacher-facilitated based upon specific learner needs. These may take the form of like-ability cooperative groups*, paired learning, and/or subject specific needs. Flexible grouping may differ depending upon students' prior knowledge, learning rate, learning style, interests, strengths, and talents.

*For gifted students, like-ability cooperative grouping will more likely demonstrate improved academic achievement only if the tasks are differentiated, more challenging than general education tasks.

General education with peer-tutoring

Peer tutoring when used for developing exceptionalities will produce higher achievement when the dyad is of like-ability or interest. Using the bright child to tutor a lower ability student does not increase the bright child's achievement.

Classroom with cross-grade grouping

Cross-grade grouping is a variation of flexible grouping for specific instruction when a gifted student requires ongoing acceleration in one or more specific academic areas. The key to this grouping pattern is a philosophy that there are no ceilings for what students can learn at a particular grade-age placement.

General education with cluster grouping

Cluster grouping consists of placing a group of identified gifted students in a heterogeneously mixed classroom setting with a classroom teacher who has had additional training in gifted education. The teacher often receives additional support from a gifted resource teacher/specialist. Regular content is differentiated to meet the needs of gifted students. Cluster groups at the secondary level can be formed within teams, or scheduled into specific content classes.

General education with resource room

Resource rooms serve gifted students beyond what is provided to them in the regular classroom setting. The resource room model must align with content standards to have significant academic effect. Resource rooms provide programs that extend, challenge and/or accelerate specific curriculum for gifted learners. Affective programs and independent studies may also be included. The key to resource room success is that the regular education and gifted education teachers collaborate on the needs of gifted students and the shared responsibility of differentiated instruction.

Regular education Honors, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate classes

Honors, AP, and IB classes serve gifted students with challenge and rigor. Gifted students may require these classes earlier than age-mates and may require differentiated instruction and curriculum. Students in these courses often prefer: lecture, small group projects, challenging and fast pace learning, competition, diverse points of view, academic interests, and extra-curricular activities.

Clusters for special interests

Special interest clusters may include both long and short term projects and competitions that are tailored for the needs and interests of gifted learners. Students may opt-in or be recommended for these options throughout the school year.

Magnet classroom

Magnet classrooms are full-time district programs where gifted students with like ability and/or talent coexist within a regular education school setting. The classrooms may be multiage or at different grade levels. The gifted students and their families are full participants within that school community.

Magnet school

Magnet school is a separate school focused on a specific subject area or areas (e.g., school for the arts, math, or technology) or on a specific group of gifted learners (e.g., academically gifted).

School within a school

School within a school places gifted students in self-contained classes at every grade level in an otherwise heterogeneous school. School within a school may have its own administrator and curriculum compared to the host school.

Schools for gifted students

Schools for gifted students are intended as full-time gifted programs within districts. Gifted and talented learners have the option of attending such a school based upon the student's academic and intellectual abilities. Teachers in schools for gifted students should have a high level of training in the nature and needs of gifted students. Curriculum is focused on depth of understanding, challenging concepts, and high order thinking skills.