



Kansas Effective Practices Instructional Toolkit

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

Cluster Grouping: A Best Practice to Promote Student Achievement and Exemplary Classroom Practices

This research-based best practice offers a way for schools to provide full-time services for the gifted students in general education classrooms. A group of five to ten identified students, usually those in the top 5% of ability in the grade level population, are clustered in the classroom of one teacher who has had training or is willing to learn how to teach exceptionally capable learners. The other students are of mixed ability. With more than eight to ten gifted students, two cluster classrooms should be formed. Cluster grouping provides opportunities for gifted students to work together with gifted peers on instructional activities, as appropriate. Results from a three-year study from the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRCGT) conducted by Genry (1999) produced the following conclusions on this best practice:

- Placing high achievers together in one classroom challenges those students, enabling other students to become academic leaders and allowing new talent to emerge.
- Cluster grouping makes it easier for teachers to meet the needs of students in their classrooms by reducing the achievement range of students within a classroom.
- Cluster grouping used in conjunction with challenging instruction and high teacher expectations may improve how teachers view their students with respect to ability and achievement.
- Achievement scores improved over a three-year period for students in a cluster group environment and the number of students identified as high achievers increased.
- Flexible grouping within and between classes that reduces the achievement range of each class can provide many benefits to all students and teachers.
 - The positive effects of cluster grouping result from many changes in the school climate such as:
 - Creating opportunities for staff development, emphasizing a variety of instructional strategies
 - Raising teacher expectations
 - Creating a sense of ownership
 - Creating opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and administration