



## ***Kansas Effective Practices Instructional Toolkit***

Implementing Research and Resources Into Action  
Research Lesson 1: Daily Challenges

### **Grouping Patterns**

Grouping is one of the decisions that teachers make during the planning stage of the Teaching Learning Cycle. Grouping is always done with the needs of the students and the purposes for instruction in mind.

### **Foundational information about grouping:**

*Ability grouping* is regrouping students for the purpose of providing curriculum aimed at a common instructional level. Generally, gifted learners need some form of grouping by ability to effectively and efficiently accomplish several education goals, including appropriate broadened, extended, and accelerated curricula (Rogers).

Gifted students benefit cognitively and affectively from working with other gifted students (Feldhusen, 1989, Kulik and Kulik, 1984, and Oakes, 1986).

The success of grouping gifted students depends upon the school district, personnel, population demographics, and culture from school to school (Rogers).

“Flexible use of student groups is the heart of differentiated instruction.” (Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom, Dianne Heacox, Ed.D.)

Excellence in Educating Gifted & Talented Learners, Third Edition, Joyce VanTassel-Baska, College of William and Mary

Rationale for homogeneous grouping:

1. It provides a better match between the developmental readiness and needs for a given student and the instruction he/she receives;
2. Students differing in ability respond differently to various educational strategies or teaching methods;
3. Students learn better when they work with other students at their level of competence or just slightly above;
4. Grouping provides a challenge for students to excel or forge ahead; and 5. Grouping makes teaching easier by restricting the range of ability/achievement.

### **Forms of Grouping:**

- **Flexible grouping** is the practice of forming and reforming groups of students. Grouping options are categorized as whole class, teacher facilitated needs-based groups, cooperative groups, pairs, and individual teaching and learning. Groups can differ according to prior knowledge, ability, learning rate, learning style preferences, interests, strengths, and talents.

- **Cluster grouping** within heterogeneous classrooms is the arrangement for placing 5 to 10 gifted students in a regular classroom with a regular classroom teacher who has additional training and support in gifted education. Regular content is differentiated in the student's strength areas. The other students in the classroom are heterogeneously mixed. Cluster groups at the middle level can be formed on a team or within a community.

### **Full-time grouping plans:**

- Magnet schools.
- Special schools - allow for full-time best practices in gifted education. Highly differentiated instruction and grouping practices are essential.
- Full-time gifted programs: Homogeneous classes; Heterogeneous classes

- Individualizing in heterogeneous classes.
- Special accelerated classes - may telescope two years of content into one year.
- Grouping for acceleration of the curriculum.
- Advanced Placement classes give able and motivated high school students the opportunity to study the material for one or more college-level courses.

#### **Part-time grouping plans:**

- Part-time or temporary groups.
- Pullout programs linked to content standards.
- Part-time special classes.
- Temporary grouping for reading and math.
- Special interest groups and clubs.
- Regrouping for acceleration of the curriculum.
- Cross-grade grouping or non-graded classrooms - allows students to receive instruction with their academic peers regardless of their grade level (e.g. a second grader may need to be grouped with third or fourth grade students for a particular subject or subjects).
- Enrichment learning clusters - in-depth and accelerated work.
- Within-class ability grouping.
- Performance or skill grouping is the instructional grouping of students based on their similar performance abilities, strengths, and/or needs in a subject area.
- Interest grouping allows for students with similar interests to work together.
- Transition-Vertical grouping.

#### **Cooperative Groups**

Can provide valuable opportunities for students to share ideas, practice critical thinking, and gain social skills. However, when cooperative learning groups are the primary strategy in the classroom, gifted students' needs may not be met. Cooperative groups should be:

- Used to increase attention to divergent thinking.
- Used to help students take on modes of scientific inquiry.
- Used for the analysis of public issues and personal values.
- Used for education in cooperation, itself.
- Used for the study of specific academic content.
- Used to teach scientific inquiry and the democratic process simultaneously.