Meeting the Needs of All Students: Cluster Grouping

Sacramento City
Unified School District

Sacramento City Unified School District GATE Programs

Sacramento City Unified School District is recognized by the California Department of Education as an exemplary GATE Program, which provides tiered program services for gifted and talented students.

As outlined in the Recommended State Standards for Gifted and Talented Programs, SCUSD, provides special-day classes in our GATE Centers, Flexible Site Programs, and GATE Cluster Programs. In our effort to increase services to under-represented populations, the GATE Department has added three Cluster Programs in schools of great need.

What is cluster grouping?

Cluster grouping is a method for providing full-time gifted services without major budget implications and with the potential to raise achievement for ALL students. With the cluster grouping model, all students are purposely placed into classrooms based on their abilities and potential.

What does it mean to place students in a gifted-cluster group?

A group of gifted-identified students is clustered into a mixed-ability classroom with a teacher who is trained, or in progress of being trained, to differentiate curriculum and instruction for gifted students.

GATE Cluster Programs in SCUSD

- John Bidwell (2- 6th grade)
- Bret Harte (2-6th grade)
- David Lubin (2-6th grade)
- Elder Creek (4-6th grade)
- Martin Luther King Jr. K-8 (2-6th grade)
- Theodore Judah (2-6th grade)
- Golden Empire (2-6th)
- Matsuyama (2-6th grade)
- William Land (2-6th grade)

SCUSD

Teachers in these classes have been trained in differentiation and the unique social and emotional needs of gifted children. They are provided with materials and training in the use of resources which are academically appropriate.

- GATE training is ongoing for all GATE teachers, including one full day during August with follow-up sessions throughout the school year. Coaching is available through the GATE Resource Teacher. Teachers of gifted students complete the GATE Certificate in provided by SCUSD GATE Department.

Isn't cluster grouping the same as tracking?

- No. In tracking, students are grouped into classrooms with others of comparable ability and remain together throughout their school years. Curriculum is based on the ability of the average students in the class.

- When clustered, all classes have a range of abilities. Teachers modify or extend grade-level standards according to the student's needs and abilities.

With cluster grouping, all classes in the grade level have students with a range of learning abilities and levels. Learning opportunities are open to all students in the class, and teachers use their student's entry points, or readiness, to determine levels and pace of curriculum.

The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model

- In the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM) all classes have high-performing students. While one or two classes have a cluster of gifted students, all other classes have a cluster of high-achieving students who, while not identified as gifted, can easily serve as positive academic role models.

Classroom compositions should be carefully structured with two main goals:

1. To ensure a balance of abilities throughout the grade level without returning to the practice of tracking.

2. To reduce the learning range found in every classroom.

Creating classes for the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model

Students are divided into five groups.

- Group 1 represents the identified gifted students

- Group 2 represents high-achieving students.

    These students will be grouped and placed in the classes that do not have gifted-cluster groups.

Susan Winebrenner and Dina Brulles, 2008

13

Creating classes

Clustering gifted students and high-achieving students not identified as gifted in <u>separate</u> classrooms is a key component of cluster grouping, which has been shown to expand academic growth for both groups.

Creating classes

- Group 3 represents students with average academic performance.
- Group 4 represents students whose performance is below average
- Group 5 represents students who produce work that falls considerably below grade-level expectation, or those with significant learning challenges

Creating classes

Students who are identified as "twice-exceptional"-those who are gifted and also have learning challenges-are placed in Group 1, as are identified gifted students who are not fluent in English.

What do the classes look like?

- As shown in the following chart, typical gifted-clusters should include students from Groups 1, 3, and 4.
- The other classrooms at the grade level will include students from Groups 2,3,4, and 5.
- Ideally, no classroom will include both gifted students and students who perform far below average, so the achievement range in all classrooms will be narrower than that of a randomly heterogeneous classroom.

Example of a Classroom Composition for The Schoolwide Clustering Model
(For a Single Grade Level)

30 Students In 3 Classes	Group 1: Gifted	Group 2: High Achieving	Group 3: Average	Group 4: Below Average	Group 5: Far Below Average
Classroom A	6	0	12	12	0
Classroom B	0	6	12	6	6
Classroom C	0	6	12	6	6

Susan Winebrenner and Dina Brulles, 2008

Goal for SCUSD

Ensure equity in class composition by implementing the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Method and continue to increase services to underrepresented gifted students.