



Bright Ideas

A Summit County ESC Gifted and Talented Publication

Cluster Grouping: What is it?

"Cluster grouping is an administrative procedure in which identified gifted students at a grade level are assigned to one classroom teacher who has had special training in how to teach high ability students."

Patricia A. Schuler from
"Cluster Grouping Coast to Coast" (1997)

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Upcoming Events

- ◆ OAGC Teacher Academy- April 5 and 6, 2005
- ◆ Dr. Jim Delisle @ Medina County -April 14 & 15, 2005
- ◆ Dr. David Vawter Staff Development-Tuesday, May 24, 2005

"Cluster grouping" is the term to signify small groups of students being assigned to a particular teacher due to the specific learning needs of the students.

In this situation, students of high ability will be placed in a cluster group of five to ten students.

- ◆ The teacher should be specially trained to recognize the characteristics of high ability students including the social and emotional needs of these particular students.
- ◆ The regular classroom teacher will need to receive specialized training in curriculum differentiation in order to meet the unique needs of these high ability students.
- ◆ A qualified gifted specialist should be available to assist the classroom teacher with curriculum planning including various differentiation strategies.
- ◆ The gifted specialist should also be available as resource for helping regular classroom teachers address the needs of the high ability students within the established cluster (s).

When administrators begin to assign students to classrooms for the following year, this may be a good time for them to consider *cluster grouping* as a good way to serve those high ability students in their building. Clustering gifted students would enable an administrator to more effectively utilize their gifted specialist. This may more importantly enable the regular classroom teacher to have time to work with struggling students in their classroom.



Cluster Grouping Research Conclusions

Based upon a longitudinal study of cluster grouping by Marcia Gentry (1999) entitled "Promoting Student Achievement and Exemplary Classroom Practices Through Cluster Grouping: A Research-Based Alternative to Heterogeneous Elementary Classrooms" has drawn the following conclusions:

1. Placing high achievers together in one classroom challenges those students, and enables other students to become academic leaders and allows new talent to emerge.
2. Cluster grouping makes it easier for teachers to meet the needs of students in their classrooms by reducing the achievement range of students within the classroom.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Flexible grouping within and between classes that reduces the achievement range of each class can provide many benefits to all students and teachers.
6. 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;
 - ◆ reducing the range of achievement levels in classrooms; and
 - ◆ creating opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and administration.

**I am a regular classroom teacher with a gifted cluster group.
How do I challenge them?**

Incorporate Critical Thinking Techniques

"Critical thinking is the ability to appraise ideas, proposals, points of view, procedures, activities, behaviors, statements, positions, and issues."

Have your students:

1. decide what is to be judged or evaluated
2. list the standards you will apply in making this decision
3. gather evidence to decide whether the standards have been met
4. consider the evidence gathered and make a judgment

Nancy Polette, *The ABCs of Books and Thinking Skills*, 1987



Incorporate Logical Thinking Techniques

Logical thinking is "believed to be a left brained function which organizes and associate ideas."

Have your students:

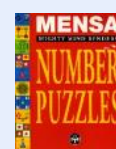
1. begin with assumptions or concepts
2. generate step by step ideas
3. arrive at an end point or solution

4. based on previous knowledge or acquired patterns of thinking

Nancy Polette, *The ABCs of Books and Thinking Skills*, 1987



Some logic puzzle publishers include:
Dandy Lion, Pieces of Learning, Fearon Teacher Aids



"There is an alarming trend in many places to eliminate gifted education programs in the mistaken belief that all students are best served in heterogeneous learning environments. Educators have been bombarded with research that makes it appear that there is no benefit to ability grouping students. However, the work of many researchers

(Allan, 91; Feldenhusen, 89; Fiedler, Lange, & Winebrenner, 93; Kulik & Kulik, 90; Rogers, 93)

clearly documents the benefits of keeping gifted students together in their areas of greatest strength for at least part of the school day. It also appears that all students, including average and below average students, may benefit when gifted students are placed in their own cluster.

(Gentry, 99)"

Susan Winebrenner & Barbara Devlin -

as quoted from

"Cluster Grouping of Gifted Students: How to Provide Full-Time Services on a Part-Time Budget: Update 2001"

Tips for Teachers: Curriculum Compacting

Now that you *know* you have gifted students in your classroom “What do you do with them?” This is a common question that many teachers face when they are informed they should be differentiating their instructional strategies to meet the needs of the high ability students in their classrooms. Your gifted students may even have a Gifted Written Education Plans that states they will receive services

through the regular classroom, which means *you* the regular classroom teacher are responsible for the services.

Don’t feel overwhelmed with the idea that you have to create elaborate lessons for each subject area for every gifted student in your class. There are ways that you can work with your gifted students that frees up time for you to provide extra assistance to some of your

struggling students. You’re probably asking, “How?”.

“Curriculum Compacting” may be the answer to how you can differentiate for gifted students in your classroom. “Curriculum Compacting” is a strategy that incorporates pre-testing and extension enrichment activities for students who show knowledge of certain academic skills (math, spelling, grammar).

Curriculum Compacting

Here’s a quick explanation of how to do Curriculum Compacting:

- ◆ Choose a skill/lesson you want to compact
- ◆ Write out an assessment that is made up of the 5 most difficult items
- ◆ Plan extension activities (“Tic-Tac-Toe or Extension Menu” sheet is a user-friendly way to go)
- ◆ Give a quick lesson on the skill (no longer than 10-15 minutes)
- ◆ Offer to all your students the opportunity to take the “5 Most Difficult” test and those that get 4 out of 5 correct on the test will be entitled to do the extension enrichment activities instead of the regular assignment
- ◆ As the students finish the test, check their papers until you find one who has a perfect paper, then have that student check the rest of the students’ papers. Make sure later on, that you recheck the students’ papers to ensure that the student checker didn’t make a mistake while scoring the papers.
- ◆ Those students who qualified and choose to do the extension enrichment activities must follow some rules that will enable you to have time to work with students who need extra help:

- The students are to work quietly on the extension enrichment or other activities pre-approved by you for the rest of the period.
- They are not to ask you any questions during this time, if they require any assistance they are to quietly ask another student.

Curriculum Compacting is just one of many ways a teacher can work with gifted students in a regular classroom setting.

For more information on the subject of “Curriculum Compacting” Susan Winebrenner’s book, *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom*, is a valuable resource for this strategy and others that are appropriate for high ability students.

Mary Ann Jopperi, Gifted and Language Arts Consultant

Propaganda Techniques Extensions Menu

Created by: M. Christoff, SCESC Gifted Consultant, Rev. 1/9/2004

Create and write an editorial expressing your opinion about a current event.	Create a persuasive brochure utilizing a certain viewpoint and include at least three key points in your argument.	Design a magazine advertisement for a product.
Prepare and create a television advertisement for a product.	Design a political cartoon expressing your opinion about a current event.	Read an editorial essay and evaluate the author’s key points. Write a paper and explain why you agree or disagree with the essay?
Research and explore wartime propaganda. Write and discuss why propaganda is utilized during wartime.	Judge the implications of a political cartoon of your choice. Write and explain why you agree or disagree with the artist’s viewpoint.	Design and create an example of wartime propaganda.



Please visit our Gifted Resources Library Page

<http://www.cybersummit.org/resources/gifted/index.asp>

Kent State University Gifted Co-Hort @ SCESC

Kent State Graduate School of Education is conducting a:

Gifted Education Endorsement

Off-Campus Cohort

What: Series of 6 master's level courses (18 hours) leading to Gifted Education Endorsement

Where: Summit County ESC

When: Fall 2005-Summer 2006

Details: All 6 courses will be delivered at the off-campus location



Reduced partnership rate of tuition

To learn more, please contact Kathy Brown, Outreach Program Manager, at 330-672-0537 or Kbrown5@kent.edu.

Websites of Interest to Teachers of the Gifted

The SET Game and Quiddler Card Game Daily Puzzler Website

<http://www.setgame.com/>

Bertie Kingore PhD. , Author of *Differentiation Simplified, Realistic, and Simplified-New CD*

<http://www.bertiekingore.com/>

Publishers of *Think and Discover* & *Above and Beyond* Magazines and Enrichment Activities for Gifted Students

<http://www.menageriepublishing.com/>

Prufrock Press-Now Owns Dandy Lion Publications – Check out these great teacher resources

<http://www.prufrock.com/>



Dr. David Vawter, Differentiation Specialist in Secondary Classrooms

Dr. David Vawter, an experienced secondary teacher, internationally recognized expert on effective instructional strategies for secondary classrooms will be presenting "Increasing Academic Success for Every Student: Practical Strategies for Differentiating Your Classroom Instruction (Grades 6-12)" on Tuesday, May 24, 2005, at the Maplewood Career Center

7:45 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

For registration information, please contact the:

Portage County ESC
Phone: 330-297-1436
Fax: 330-297-1113



Challenge Every Child