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# Framework for Gifted Education

Revised edition

This framework for state schools consists of:

- Policy for the education of students who are gifted
- Guidelines for acceleration

# **Our vision for the education of students who are gifted**

Optimising every student's opportunity to achieve their potential lies at the heart of Education Queensland's commitment to all students.

Our vision for students who are gifted is that they feel valued in a learning environment which both challenges and supports them to pursue excellence and develop a passion for lifelong learning.

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The Framework is supported by resources and practical tools for meeting the learning needs of students who are gifted. These are available at: [www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t](http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t)

# Policy for the education of students who are gifted<sup>1</sup>

## Purpose of this policy

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This Policy serves students who are gifted, their educators and parents/carers. It establishes our shared responsibility to ensure that these students are provided with opportunities to develop their abilities and to meet their potential for outstanding achievement.

The Queensland Government's Education and Training Reforms for the Future: A White Paper signals the commitment of the Queensland Government to ensure that every young person is supported to achieve success. This includes students who are gifted. Students who are gifted can be found in all communities and in almost every classroom.<sup>2</sup>

Embedding the objectives of this Policy into their planning will assist state schools to fulfil the goals of Queensland State Education – 2010 (QSE–2010) including:

- enabling all young people to achieve success at school
- providing specific assistance and targeting programs to students who are gifted
- being flexible enough to accommodate the individual learning needs of different students.

To ensure effective provision for individual students who are gifted, state schools need to consider a range of options for their curriculum and their school organisation. These include identification procedures, differentiated curriculum and acceleration.

This Policy provides principles and recommendations to guide effective practice in the education of students who are gifted. State schools should also refer to the Guidelines for Acceleration and to online resources at: [www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t](http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t) to support identification and differentiated curriculum.

## Objectives for students who are gifted

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Education Queensland's commitment to the education of students who are gifted will be demonstrated by:

- a greater awareness of the prevalence and specific needs of students who are gifted
- the identification of all students who are gifted regardless of their ethnicity, location, (dis)ability, gender or economic status

- meeting the specific needs of students who are gifted and improving their learning outcomes
- cooperation and collaboration among teachers, parents/carers, students, education administrators and the community to ensure students who are gifted have opportunities to develop their abilities.

## Who are the gifted?

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Students who are gifted excel, or are capable of excelling, in one or more areas such as general intelligence, specific academic studies, visual and performing arts, physical ability, creative thinking, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Giftedness in a student is commonly characterised by an advanced pace of learning, quality of thinking or capability for remarkably high standards of performance compared to students of the same age.

Although these students are capable of outstanding achievement, the learning environment is pivotal to enabling them to demonstrate and develop their abilities. Students who are gifted are at risk of underachieving and disengaging from learning if they are not identified and catered for appropriately.

## Identification of students who are gifted

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State schools need to develop a process for identifying gifted students that suits their own school context and is adopted as a school-wide approach. Many tools are available to assist with identification and a combination of techniques is necessary, including teachers' informed observations and professional judgment. The recommended identification tool for state schools is the Gifted and Talented Checklist for Teachers developed by Michael Sayler.<sup>3</sup> This is available at: [www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t](http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t).

Information from several sources, such as teachers, parents/carers, the student, a gifted-education specialist and/or guidance officer is needed. A range of information about the student's behaviour, achievement and dispositions in intellectual, social and creative endeavours is usually required to gain a reliable view of a child's gifts.

For more information on identification methods and approaches developed by particular schools, visit Education Queensland's Gifted and Talented Professional Learning Community at: [www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t](http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t)

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'gifted and talented' is also commonly used in the field and in the literature of the area.

<sup>2</sup> It is now widely accepted that at least 10 per cent of students are gifted and need specific educational provision to engage them in learning and enable them to develop their abilities.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Sayler (Harrison, C 1999, Appendix B, *Giftedness in early childhood*, Inscript Publishing Sydney). The Sayler questionnaires (for teachers and parents) are useful tools to initiate dialogue between teachers and parents.

## Background

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In a rapidly changing world where future sustainability, economic achievement and social harmony will require creative and innovative solutions, society will benefit from fostering the abilities of people who are gifted.

The Queensland Government's Smart State agenda puts an added focus on the importance of establishing provisions in all state schools that identify gifted students, engage them in learning and enable them to develop their abilities.

To identify students who are gifted, comprehensive and ongoing strategies are needed as abilities are multifaceted and developmental, that is, they can become apparent at different stages of life.

The manifestation of a gifted student's abilities is affected by different factors including:

- acknowledgment and ongoing affirmation of their giftedness by their peers, parents/carers and teachers
- the student's temperament and view of themselves (such as self-confidence, independence, perseverance, interests, sense of self-efficacy)
- appropriate intellectual challenge, richness of experience and level of support to develop gifted attributes – both at school and at home
- interaction with others of similar interests and abilities.

The objectives, principles and responsibilities of this Policy underpin the implementation of a wide range of reform initiatives in Education Queensland. Providing differentiated curriculum and flexible provisions for students who are gifted is fundamental to these initiatives and should be supported in all professional learning programs on curriculum and pedagogy.

## Principles for students who are gifted

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The vision and objectives for students who are gifted are underpinned by the following principles:

**Equity** – All students, including students who are gifted, have the right to fair and equitable access to appropriate educational programs that meet their specific learning needs.

**Recognition of difference** – Students who are gifted are recognised as different from students of their own age in their speed of learning, the insightful quality of their thinking and their advanced ability in one or more areas.

**Educational excellence** – All students, including students who are gifted, have the right to appropriate educational programs that result in learning outcomes consistent with their abilities.

**Partnerships** – The education of students who are gifted is the shared responsibility of teachers, parents/carers, students and education administrators.

**Evidence-based practices** – The schooling of students who are gifted must be informed by contemporary research-based practice and by ongoing evaluation and improvement.

## Responsibilities for enacting the policy

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Students who are gifted will have the best opportunities to realise their potential for outstanding achievement if parents/carers, teachers, principals, Executive Directors (Schools), and others work together.

### Parents/carers are encouraged to:

- become familiar with characteristics of giftedness and methods for identifying children who are gifted (see *Identification of students who are gifted* on page 2)
- liaise with teachers and others to:
  - identify the child's gifts
  - ensure that the child has appropriate and ongoing educational opportunities
- provide a stimulating and supportive learning environment at home
- encourage their child to pursue excellence, develop mastery and become an independent learner
- become informed about the options available to support their child's development, including community organisations and programs.

### Teachers' responsibilities include:

- becoming familiar with characteristics of giftedness
- applying appropriate methods for identifying students who are gifted (see *Identification of students who are gifted* on page 2)
- liaising with parents/carers regarding a student's gifts and needs
- enlisting specialist support staff including guidance officers and gifted-education specialists
- seeking specialist advice and resources to assist in providing a curriculum that is differentiated in terms of learning experiences, teaching practices and teacher expectations so that content, learning processes and student tasks reflect different levels of knowledge, skills, interests and learning styles
- challenging students who are gifted to continue their development through curricular activities that require depth of study, complexity of thinking, fast pace of learning, high-level skills development and/or creative and critical thinking (e.g. through independent investigations, tiered tasks, diverse real-world applications, mentors)

- critically reflecting on the effectiveness of their school's programs and practices in meeting the needs of gifted students
- undertaking professional learning to enhance knowledge and skills through dialogue and the sharing of effective practice.

### **Principals' responsibilities include:**

- providing leadership in the school community to identify students who are gifted and responding appropriately to their individual needs by:
  - establishing reliable and valid means of identifying gifted students as part of school practice that is ongoing both within a school year and across year transitions
  - incorporating identification, tracking and profiling processes into the school-wide support strategy
  - facilitating access to a range of educational provisions that include acceleration (e.g. curriculum compacting within a year level, year acceleration) and organisational structures (e.g. cluster grouping, ability grouping, vertical curricula, multi-aging)
  - establishing collaborative processes that involve students, parents/carers, classroom teachers, school administrators and guidance officers or gifted-education specialists
- increasing school capacity to provide appropriate support options for students who are gifted by:
  - assisting teachers to access suitable professional development
  - supporting collaboration and networking within and beyond the school (including across primary and secondary schools) to increase access to programs, expertise, facilities and information
  - facilitating community support and involvement to extend the capacity of the school to engage gifted students in learning that challenges and supports them
- including in the school's strategic documents, namely the Three Year Partnership Agreement or School Planning Overview, School Annual Report and Operational Plan and the Triennial School Review, specific strategies to meet the learning needs of students who are gifted
- providing support and approval for accelerations
- liaising with tertiary and other institutions regarding alternative-entry options (e.g. early entry, access to and credit for dual enrolment).

### **Executive Directors' (Schools) responsibilities include:**

- ensuring accountability for the performance of all state schools in the district to improve outcomes for students who are gifted – as reflected in the Three Year Partnership Agreement or School Planning Overview, School Annual Report and Operational Plan and the Triennial School Review
- liaising and negotiating across districts to maximise effective implementation of this Framework
- ensuring district planning for learning and development acknowledges differentiated curriculum and flexible provisions for students who are gifted as fundamental to enacting all systemic curriculum initiatives
- encouraging collaboration and resource sharing across primary and secondary schools
- encouraging schools to undertake action research and partner with gifted-education specialists and external experts to inform their:
  - understanding of the specific characteristics of gifted students
  - identification of students who are gifted
  - use of successful practices in pedagogy, support, tracking and profiling of students who are gifted.

### **Education Queensland's responsibilities include:**

- providing advice to the Minister, senior officers and the community on the education of students who are gifted
- promoting the integration of effective practice for students who are gifted into all departmental curriculum initiatives
- providing advice and support relating to the education of gifted students and the implementation of this Framework
- promoting online learning for teachers about effective practice in meeting the learning needs of students who are gifted
- promoting online learning for teachers and also students who are gifted
- liaising with Queensland Studies Authority regarding the design of syllabus support materials to reflect the needs of students who are gifted
- collaborating at a state and national level on issues relating to the education of students who are gifted.

# Guidelines for acceleration

These *Guidelines for Acceleration* are part of the state school *Framework for Gifted Education* and support the *Policy for the Education of Students who are Gifted*.

The *Guidelines for Acceleration* include:

- information about acceleration
- responsibilities of the principal
- an overview of the recommended process for acceleration
- guidelines for determining a student's suitability for year advancement
- a glossary.

## What is acceleration?

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The term 'acceleration', also referred to as 'accelerated progression', relates to an advanced pace of learning. It enables students who are gifted to learn at a level corresponding to their ability and matched to the speed at which they learn. Acceleration is based on comprehensive assessment of the readiness of the individual. Different forms of acceleration include:

- curriculum compaction
- subject acceleration
- year advancement.

### Curriculum compaction

Curriculum compacting is a process used to streamline the regular curriculum. By using pre-testing to determine and excuse a student from material that is already known, time can be allocated for alternative learning that suits the learner's level of mastery, interests and learning preferences.

### Subject acceleration

Subject acceleration occurs when a student takes a single subject, or a limited range of subjects, one or two years earlier. Movement to another class or online learning may be required for subject acceleration.

### Year advancement

Year advancement (also referred to as 'grade advancement', 'accelerated progression' and 'grade skipping'): students progress through schooling at least one full year ahead of their age peers.

Subject or year advancement is not an end in itself. An appropriately challenging curriculum is the goal.

## Why accelerate?

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There is a misconception that gifted students will succeed without additional assistance because of the abilities they possess. However, research shows that gifted students are at risk of underachieving without

specialised provision. Underachievement can lead to poor study habits, psychological and behavioural problems and a sense of low esteem.

Patterns of underachievement are likely to develop unless gifted students are given the opportunity to develop confidence through being successful at tasks that are personally challenging. Like all learners, gifted students need to experience success with tasks that move them beyond what they already know to develop new understanding and skills.

As well as the academic benefits, accelerated programs can:

- increase enthusiasm for learning and life
- reduce boredom in school
- improve attitudes toward school
- enhance self-esteem and sense of accomplishment
- help students develop a realistic understanding of their ability as a result of working with intellectual peers.

Research has shown that 'talented youngsters who were accelerated into higher grades performed as well as the talented older pupils already in those grades' and that 'talented accelerates showed almost a year's advancement over talented same-age non-accelerates'.<sup>4</sup>

## What should the principal do?

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Responsibilities of the principal include:

- ensuring that the school has an appropriate process for considering requests for student acceleration. A recommended process is outlined in the diagram on page 7.
- appointing a Case Manager to coordinate the acceleration process
- liaising with parents/carers and teachers as partners in the process of considering, planning and monitoring acceleration
- approving an acceleration plan
- collaborating across primary and secondary schools and with tertiary institutions to enable subject and year advancements as appropriate
- assisting teachers to access suitable professional development.

## Who is involved?

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It is important that decisions on appropriate actions for each student are made after collaboration among:

- parents/carers
- the principal or principal's nominee
- the student's current teacher(s)
- the receiving teacher(s)
- a guidance officer and/or gifted-education specialist
- the student.

<sup>4</sup> Kulik and Kulik 1991, *Handbook of gifted education*, Allyn and Bacon, Needham Heights, MA. pp. 190–1

Teachers from more than one school (e.g. primary and secondary) may be involved in the acceleration process and should share information to support the process.

Parents/carers nominating their child for acceleration are required to provide evidence of the child's suitability. This is best achieved through a series of questions<sup>5</sup> to elicit information about several aspects of the child's development and the child's disposition, including intellectual strengths, social and emotional maturity, creative behaviours, special interests, leadership abilities, work habits and motivation.

## Determining a student's suitability for year advancement<sup>6</sup>

State schools should consider each of these factors:

### Assessment

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When assessing whether year advancement is suitable, a range of aspects of a student's development should be considered. Information sources may include: interviews with stakeholders, a guidance officer report and/or a report from a gifted-education specialist, results of standardised tests, work samples, observations and a psychologist's report. Psychometric testing can provide valuable information; however, this testing is not always necessary, particularly if such testing is culturally inappropriate.

### Academic level

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Academically, students should demonstrate skill levels, or the potential to attain skill levels, above the average of the class they are recommended to enter.

### Social and emotional maturity

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Judgments about the child's social and emotional maturity should include input from the student's parents/carers and a gifted-education specialist and/or guidance officer and/or a psychologist. Gifted students sometimes have difficulty being accepted by their classmates and the absence of close peer relationships should not be confused with social immaturity. Some gifted students' social or emotional difficulties may have been caused by inappropriately low year-level placement. In such cases the problem may be alleviated by accelerated progression.

## Student's eagerness to advance

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It is important that a student should not feel unduly pressured to advance. The student should be eager to advance.

### Receiving teacher

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The receiving teacher will need a positive attitude towards the year-level advancement and must be willing to help the student adjust to the new situation. Access to professional development may be needed to enable the receiving teacher to meet the student's educational needs.

### Trial period

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All cases of accelerated progression should be arranged on a trial basis of at least six weeks. Students should be aware that if a trial is not beneficial, they will be returned to the original year placement. Sensitive management is needed, in such cases, to ensure that the students do not feel they have 'failed'.

### Monitoring

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It is essential that the academic, social and emotional development of accelerated students be closely monitored throughout the trial period and on an ongoing basis. Services of a gifted-education specialist and/or a guidance officer may be needed.

### Cautions

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Care should be exercised not to create excessive expectations about the benefits of year advancement. It is not a 'miracle cure'. Highly gifted students are so advanced in their intellectual or academic development that a single-year progression may still leave them unchallenged or bored at school. For such students, further advancement may be advisable.

### Sound evidence for year advancement

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The research literature on accelerated progression shows that acceleration does benefit carefully selected students both academically and socially. Conversely, failure to advance a highly gifted student may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation and maladjustment.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to sample form 'Nomination of a student for acceleration' and to Michael Saylor's questionnaires for teachers and parents/carers. (Harrison, C 1999 Appendix B, *Giftedness in early childhood*, Inscript Publishing Sydney). These resources are available from: [www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t](http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t)

<sup>6</sup> These guidelines for consideration are adapted from: Feldhusen, JF, Proctor, TB & Black, KN 1986, *Guidelines for grade advancement of precocious children*. Roeper Review, 9(1), pp. 25–7.

# The acceleration process

Key person	Steps to take	Resources
Teacher or parent/ carer	<b>Nominate</b> a student for acceleration. Identify student's history and profile.	Sample form online
Principal	<b>Appoint a Case Manager</b> to coordinate the process. Inform the student's parent/carer that a request to accelerate has been made (if not initiated by parent/carer).	
Case Manager	<b>Form an Acceleration Team</b> which may include the principal or other school administrator, student's current teacher(s), receiving teacher(s), a guidance officer (or principal's nominee), gifted-education specialist, parents/carers and the student. These people will collaboratively decide on the appropriate course of action.	
Case Manager	<b>Distribute information to Acceleration Team</b> including information about identification, gifted and talented programs, professional learning and questionnaires for parents/carers and teachers (available on the Gifted and Talented Professional Learning Community at: <a href="http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&amp;t">www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&amp;t</a> ).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gifted and Talented online Professional Learning Community</li> <li>• Saylor questionnaires</li> </ul>
Case Manager and Acceleration Team	<b>Collect information about the student</b> including history and results of previous acceleration strategies, a guidance officer report, results of standardised tests, work samples, observations, data from stakeholder interviews and a psychologist's report.	Gifted and Talented online Professional Learning Community
Case Manager and Acceleration Team	<b>Meet to discuss the case for acceleration.</b> Evaluate the case history and information collected. Evaluate advantages, disadvantages and goals to be achieved through acceleration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample form online</li> <li>• Guidelines for determining year advancement (below)</li> </ul>
<b>Negotiate a course of action</b> such as:		
Acceleration is not required: maintain current educational program	Acceleration within year level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• curriculum compacting</li> <li>• negotiated, self-paced investigations</li> <li>• extracurricular programs</li> <li>• mentoring</li> </ul>	Accelerated progression: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• early entry to secondary/tertiary</li> <li>• year advancement, subject acceleration</li> <li>• dual enrolment</li> </ul>
Case Manager and Acceleration Team	<b>An acceleration plan</b> is documented, <b>endorsed</b> by the Acceleration Team and <b>approved</b> by the principal and parent/carer.	
Approval from principal and parent/carer	<b>Review student progress.</b> The student's progress should be reviewed a minimum of six weeks after the plan is approved. Ongoing monitoring and comprehensive records should be maintained.	

## **Additional sources of support**

### **Gifted and Talented Professional Learning Community**

[www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t](http://www.learningplace.com.au/en/g&t)

This site supports the recognition and development of students who are gifted. Advice, guidelines, tools and practical examples are provided to assist implementation of the Framework. Professional learning is supported through online learning modules<sup>7</sup> and the sharing of practice through action research. Forums and chat rooms are available to discuss all matters related to the education of students who are gifted. The Learning Place site is accessible to parents/carers, educators and students.

### **Education Queensland's Curriculum Exchange**

[www.education.qld.gov.au/learningplace/cx](http://www.education.qld.gov.au/learningplace/cx)

The Curriculum Exchange has a Hot Topic on 'Gifted and Talented'. This online collection provides a range of high-quality resources, including print, video and electronic, that support the topic 'Gifted and Talented' across the curriculum. This collection of resources is frequently updated to include recently published materials.

### **The Queensland Association for Gifted and Talented Children Inc. (QAGTC)**

[www.qagtc.org.au](http://www.qagtc.org.au)

QAGTC is a member-funded and volunteer-based organisation dedicated to supporting and developing gifted children. Members include schools, educators and parents. The Association provides: a quarterly journal; a resource library; support and information services for children, parents and educators; children's and adults' activities; professional development workshops and advocacy for advancing the cause of gifted children within communities, education systems and government. QAGTC annually conducts a major state conference and supports regional conferences.

### **Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT)**

[www.aaegt.net.au](http://www.aaegt.net.au)

AAEGT is a national body with representation from all states and territories. Key objectives of the AAEGT are to: ensure equitable and socially just educational provisions for the gifted and talented; stimulate and encourage further research into the nature of giftedness, talents, creativity and the education and development of the gifted and talented; disseminate the results of research; and encourage the exchange of ideas and experiences to promote teaching and teacher-training techniques in support of the gifted and talented.

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<sup>7</sup> Modules: Exploring giftedness, Introduction to curriculum differentiation and Recognising difference: identifying gifted learners.