

Policy

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Gifted and Talented Education

Purpose

This policy addresses the educational needs of high potential learners, including but not limited to students demonstrating giftedness. It outlines the requirements for educational adjustments and/or access to talent development programs. It is a document designed to inform stakeholders within Catholic Education Services and school communities of the decision-making processes and provisions available for high potential learners. The document outlines the obligations of schools regarding the development of school policies and procedures to meet the needs of high potential learners.

The document establishes a rationale for Gifted and Talented Education within Cairns Catholic Education, based on pedagogical research and alignment with the Cairns Catholic Education *Vision Statement*, *Strategic Directions*, and the *School Effectiveness Framework*. It also explains the mechanisms for identification and referral, curriculum differentiation, talent development, acceleration and early entry, social and emotional support structures, as well as stakeholder responsibilities.

Policy

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Cairns will implement inclusive practices which facilitate optimal student learning and wellbeing, and support the needs of high potential learners.

Catholic schools will:

- Adopt and action this policy within the context of their existing school framework;
- Identify the needs of high potential learners;
- Implement appropriate procedures and programs to cater for the needs of high potential learners;
- Develop equitable and objective identification and referral procedures for high potential learners; including students demonstrating giftedness, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, location, disability, gender or socioeconomic status;
- Implement effective differentiation practices and talent development programs to help students fulfill their potential;
- Implement a holistic approach to gifted and talented education through social and emotional support programs;
- Foster collaborative and cooperative home-school partnerships to support gifted students to develop their abilities and to foster wellbeing and learning outcomes;
- Establish productive partnerships beyond the school including between primary schools and secondary colleges, liaising with tertiary and other institutions, to increase access to programs, expertise, facilities, information and transition processes for gifted students;
- Provide opportunities for staff professional learning in the education of high potential learners; and
- Engage in data informed practices and the ongoing evaluation of programs which meet the specific needs of high potential learners.

Rationale

Catholic Education in the Diocese of Cairns recognises the right of every student to a quality education: 'All students regardless of race, age or gender, by virtue of their dignity as human persons, have a right to an education that is suited to their particular needs and adapted to this ability.'¹

Furthermore, 'our schools are committed to fostering a culture of inclusion that responds to the educational needs of students regardless of their abilities, backgrounds and aspirations. Our school communities are places where the uniqueness and individuality of students and families is recognised and welcomed and the human dignity of each student is promoted.'²

This policy is underpinned by the core principle that made in the image of God, every human being is unique, possessing gifts which should be developed and should be treated with respect and dignity.

This policy is aligned with Cairns Catholic Education's *Strategic Directions*, with its Guiding Principles of 'Embracing the gifts of all' and 'Being accountable for student learning through continuous improvement'.³ The policy demonstrates a commitment to Optimal Learning and Wellbeing for All Students, evidenced by 'inclusive, innovative and futures directed educational practice grounded in research', 'diverse learning opportunities for all students' and a commitment to productive partnerships.⁴ In addition, this policy is closely linked with Cairns Catholic Education's *Learning Framework* and the *School Effectiveness Framework*, and to the position statement *Inclusive Practices in Catholic Schools in Queensland (2009)*. The *Learning Framework* refers to learners as 'unique individuals who bring their own strengths, talents and needs to the learning process';⁵ while the *School Effectiveness Framework* prioritises Wellbeing and Learning for ALL students, in particular 'differentiated teaching and learning'.⁶

The policy is in accordance with legal obligations under the Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth).⁷

Consequences

Identification and Referral

Schools are required to use a range of strategies in identifying high potential learners. These identification processes must demonstrate adherence to the principles of inclusion, accuracy, accountability, equity, validity, reliability and comprehensiveness.

Identification of high potential learners through data gathering entails:

Phase 1 - Enrolment:

Information provided by parents/carers on enrolment e.g. school reports, NAPLAN and other information from previous education provider; therapist reports; medical reports etc.

During the enrolment interview with the Principal, the parents/carers and student discuss prior and future options for support, educational adjustments and educational opportunities

Phase 2 - Ongoing Monitoring: Standardised assessment and off level testing (e.g. NAPLAN, PAT-R, PAT Maths, PM Benchmarking); Ongoing classroom assessment; Tracking student results via repeated testing (Eg. PM Benchmarking, Probe, PAT-R, PAT Maths)

Phase 3 - Student Profiling: Questionnaires, interviews, testing (e.g. WISC-V, Woodcock Johnson, Stanford Binet, CoGAT) and Personalised Learning Plans.

Identification and Referral Process using Diverse Learners Team

<https://staff.cns.catholic.edu.au/dept/SS/Student%20Services%20General%20Information/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

Support and intervention

Support mechanisms are to be provided by schools in order to ensure the needs of high potential learners are being met. As such, the school team plans support, educational adjustments and/or educational opportunities for high potential learners, in consultation and collaboration with parents/carers and students.

Personalised Learning Plans (PLP) are used to cater for student diversity by meeting individual learning needs. A PLP documents agreed adjustments and goals (if appropriate) to support student learning and wellbeing. For students undertaking accelerated learning programs, an Out of Phase (OOP) Overview is also required to document individualised curriculum.

Curriculum Differentiation

In implementing effective curriculum differentiation, schools are required to ensure the provision of developmentally appropriate learning opportunities, aligned with the Australian Curriculum. These may include:

- Differentiation of learning goals, ensuring they are aligned with a student's Zone of Proximal Development, student interests, and the Australian Curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to use a cross-disciplinary approach.
- Differentiation of learning and teaching processes entails the developmentally appropriate use of resources such as technology, strategies such as scaffolding and gradual release of responsibility, and learning activities.
- Students may also require modified assessment with negotiated conditions in order to ensure effective extension. Options include: Project based learning, research tasks, higher order tasks, problem based learning, and alternative modes of assessment.
- The learning environment may also be altered in order to facilitate extension opportunities, through for example increased access to technology, ability grouping, mentoring, and cooperative learning.

Acceleration

To maximise development of individual ability, a student's progress through the curriculum may be accelerated, entailing an increase in the pace of learning. Consultation, substantial pre-assessment and adherence to relevant existing policies are mandatory for the implementation of any forms of acceleration.

Acceleration can be provided through:¹⁰

- Early Entry to Prep: High potential learners who display academic and social readiness may begin school at a younger age than most other students. Schools must refer to the *Variation to school age entry enrolment* guideline prior to implementing this form of acceleration;
- Curriculum Compacting and Telescoping: This form of acceleration entails reducing the time a student, or group of students, takes to complete the school curriculum and removing repetitive demonstrations of mastery (e.g. completes one year in a semester or three years in two years);
- Subject Acceleration (in one or more learning areas): This can occur within the school, across primary and secondary schools, or across a secondary school and a tertiary institution;
- Year Level Skipping: This form of acceleration entails placement of a student at a higher year level for all learning areas;
- Radical Acceleration: This type of acceleration involves placement of a student at a year level that is two or more years higher than current placement; and
- Early entry to Secondary or Tertiary Education.

The Catholic Education Services – Diocese of Cairns' policy *Enrolment of students substantially below or above year level expectations* must be applied.¹¹

It is expected that the effective implementation of acceleration will be enhanced with:

- Ongoing consultation with the student's parents/carers, and in some cases, the student concerned;
- Consideration of alternative strategies such as targeted individual programs within the existing year level and/or extracurricular programs;
- Professional consultation to assess the student's suitability to enter a different year level
- Consideration of all areas of student development (including but not limited to cognitive, social and emotional development);
- An awareness of what is required by the school including focused teaching and other support, and in particular the support of the receiving teacher(s);
- The development of Personalised Learning Plans;
- The use of trials and ongoing monitoring;

- A fully documented process, including parental consent.¹²

There is a strong expectation that a decision to enrol a student in a year (or more) above their chronological age will be very rarely applied.

Talent Development Programs

Talent Development Programs reflect our Catholic ethos by supporting the individual gifts and talents of all students. These co-curricular or extracurricular programs facilitate maximisation of student potential through educational opportunities, designed to improve students' knowledge and skills in areas of special interest. Such programs may include year-long programs, day events, competitions, camps, excursions and interschool events.

Social and Emotional Support

At the core of the School Effectiveness Framework is the prioritisation of students' wellbeing and learning. As a strong supporter of holistic education, Cairns Catholic Education consequently highly recommends the provision of social and emotional support programs for high potential learners and mandates the implementation of the *Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Policy*.¹³ CES also encourages strong collaboration between academic and pastoral teams in order to support fully the needs of each learner. Schools are encouraged to develop programs designed to enhance student engagement with learning, social skills and peer relationships, independence, resilience, crisis management, anxiety or stress, leadership, confidence and self-esteem, communication skills, and interpersonal skills.

Role of Data

Schools are required to collect and analyse data to identify, program and monitor support for high potential learners. Assessment for Learning provides evidence that informs planning for student wellbeing and learning.

Data Informed Teaching involves a three step process, entailing collection of data on student performance, analysis of trends to determine the needs of individual students and cohorts, and the use of that data to inform teaching practice, in particular facilitate differentiation.

Data collection is required over three phases during a student's schooling: through the enrolment process, ongoing program monitoring (which may include standardized testing and subject based assessment), and student profiling (which may include questionnaires and additional testing). Data collected from assessments and tests outlined on the School Data Plan and from other sources will assist in process of Assessment for Learning for high potential learners.

Data is used to:

- identify high potential learners through enrolment, ongoing monitoring and student profiling;
- inform educational adjustments; and
- inform teaching strategies.

The establishment in schools of an ongoing cycle of data collection and analysis, followed by action planning and adjustment of instruction is strongly supported. CES recommends intensive collaboration between stakeholders to ensure students' academic progress is monitored and timely action plans and support programs are developed in response to changes in academic results, behaviour or rate of development in comparison with peers. The analysis of student learning and trends can be enhanced through use of the BI tool features in Student and Class Analysis and Year Level and Subject Analysis.

Data informed teaching for high potential learners aligns with the *Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment and Reporting in the Diocese of Cairns* document.¹⁴

Diocesan responsibilities

Catholic Education Services:

- support schools to implement policy and guidelines
- provide advice to schools and teachers in regard to support, educational adjustments and opportunities for high potential learners
- assist in consultation, planning and documentation processes related to personalised learning for high potential learners
- facilitate collaboration and sharing of resources between schools as appropriate
- disseminate the latest research and information to schools regarding the education of high potential learners
- liaise with the wider community on matters relating to the education of high potential learners

Principal:¹⁵

- promotes a culture of inclusion within the school community
- promotes a culture of excellence in learning and teaching
- openly supports programs for High Potential Learners
- enables opportunities for professional learning for teachers
- prioritises resources (budget, personnel, programs etc.) to cater for high potential learners
- encourages innovation, quality, consistency and sustainability in the provision of support programs and educational adjustments for high potential learners

(HPL) Program Coordinator:^{16 17}

- Promotes the philosophy of inclusive schooling in a supportive school environment;
- Consults and collaborates with all stakeholders and ensure effective communication to promote informed decision making and consistent support;
- Develops effective professional and community networks
- Assists teachers in data collection and data analysis for high potential learners
- Supports the development and implementation of Personalised Learning Plans for high potential learners
- Collaboratively monitors and evaluates programs for High Potential learners
- Develops and implements consistent identification and referral procedures

Teacher:¹⁸

- Creates a nurturing and stimulating learning environment, which is inclusive, learner centred and academically challenging
- Consults and collaborates with all stakeholders and ensures effective communication to promote informed decision making and consistent support;
- Understands the needs of high potential learners and the nature of the learning process and tailors teaching programs accordingly
- Engages in data collection and analysis
- Follows relevant identification and referral procedures
- Plans and prepares effective, quality learning and teaching programs for high potential learners
- Implements Personalised Learning Plans for high potential learners
- Monitors and assesses student performance for developmental feedback and reporting purposes
- Participates in professional learning

Reflection

References and Further Reading:

1. Declaration on Christian Education (1965) GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS Proclaimed by Pope Paul VI October 28, 1965.
2. CES Cairns (2013) *Catholic Schools: Preparation for a living worth living*, Cairns.
3. CES Cairns (2016), *Strategic Directions*, Cairns.
4. Ibid.
5. CES Cairns (2007), *Learning Framework*, Cairns.
6. CES Cairns (2016), *School Effectiveness Framework*, Cairns.
7. Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)
8. Alpert, K (2015), *Model of Gifted and Talented Education in a Schooling Context*, www.alpertenterprisesinternational.com

9. Gagné, F (2003) 'Transforming gifts into talents: The DMGT as a developmental theory', In Colangelo, N & Davis, G (Eds) *Handbook of Gifted Education* (3rd ed.), pp. 60-74, Allyn & Bacon, Boston.
10. Department of Education, Training and Employment (n.d.) *Supporting Information: Gifted and Talented Students*, Brisbane
11. CES Cairns (2014), *Enrolment of students substantially below or above year level expectations*, Cairns.
12. Ibid.
13. CES Cairns (2014), *Social and Emotional Learning Policy*, Cairns.
14. CES Cairns (2017), *Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment and Reporting in the Diocese of Cairns*, Cairns.
15. CES Cairns (2016), *Position Description: Principal*, Cairns.
16. CES Cairns (2016), *Position Description: Primary Learning Support Teacher*, Cairns.
17. CES Cairns (2016), *Position Description: Secondary Learning Support Teacher*, Cairns.
18. CES Cairns (2016), *Position Description: Teacher*, Cairns.
19. Australian Curriculum website (www.australiancurriculum.edu.au) (accessed [30.01.2018]) and was not modified. The material is licensed under CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>). Version updates are tracked on the 'Curriculum version history' page (www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home/CurriculumHistory) of the Australian Curriculum website
20. Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Interaction between learning and development*. From: *Mind and Society* (pp. 79-91). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Katherine Alpert, Director of Alpert Enterprises International and specialist in Gifted Education, who served as consultant and co-author of this Policy Document.

See also (Related Policies and Guidelines)

Core documents

Catholic Schools: Preparation for a living worth living (2013)

Strategic Directions (2016)

Learning Framework (2007)

School Effectiveness Framework (2016)

Curriculum, Pedagogy, Assessment and Reporting in the Diocese of Cairns (2017)

Policies and guidelines

Policy: *Enrolment of students substantially below or above year level*

Policy: *Social and Emotional Learning Policy*

Guideline: *Variation to school age entry enrolment*

Position descriptions, CES Cairns (2016)

Position Description: Principal

Position Description: Primary Learning Support Teacher

Position Description: Secondary Learning Support Teacher

Position Description: Teacher

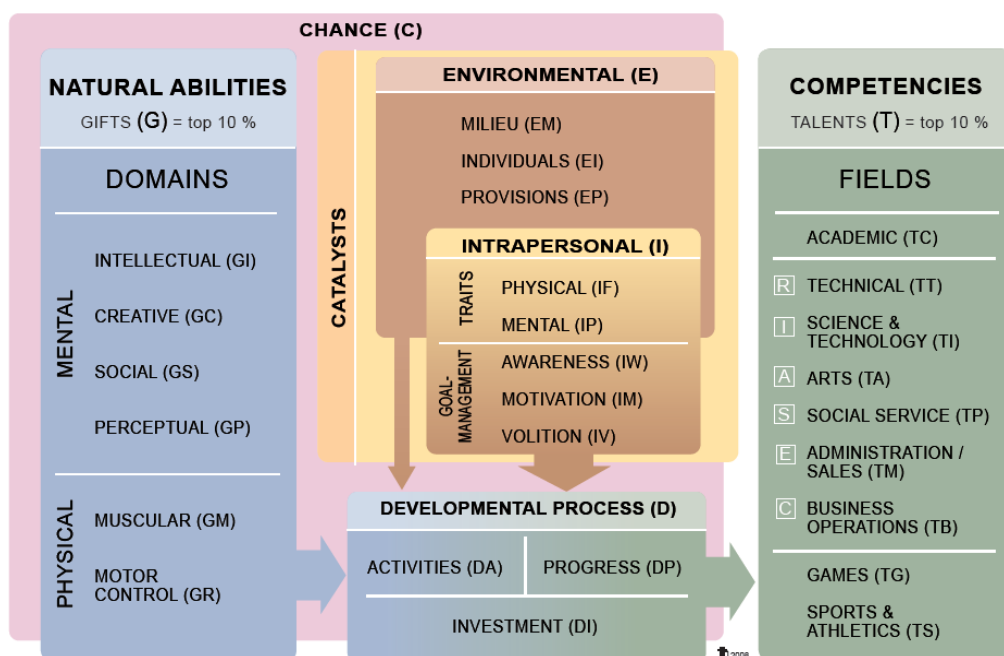
Attachment 1: Definitions

Gift: Gift refers to the possession of natural abilities or aptitudes at levels beyond what might be expected for one's age, in one or more domains including intellectual, creative, social, perceptual or physical. This definition distinguishes giftedness from talent, with giftedness representing outstanding potential and talent representing outstanding performance.

Talent: A performance-based concept, talent requires the demonstration of ability at a level significantly beyond what might be expected from same-age-peers in one or more domains. While giftedness is the potential to achieve, talent is the realisation of that potential as a result of external catalysts such as chance, environmental and intrapersonal influences, and students' learning experiences.

The policy incorporates the underlying principles of giftedness and talent based on François Gagné's (2003) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT).⁸ The Gagné model differentiates between natural abilities (gifts or aptitudes) and systematically developed skills (talents).

Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT)



Gifted and talented students: ¹⁹

Gifted and talented students vary in terms of the nature and level of their abilities; there is no single homogeneous group of gifted and talented students. Gifted and talented students:

- vary in abilities and aptitudes;
- vary in their level of giftedness;
- vary in achievement;
- are not always visible and easy to identify; and
- come from diverse backgrounds and are found in all cultures, socio-economic levels and geographic locations.

(© Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2010 to present)

High Potential Learners (HPL): HPL refers to students who are

- gifted in one or more areas;
- underachiever: a students' gift (abilities) may not be manifesting at the time due to impeding factors such as socio-emotional factors, learning difficulties or disabilities, lack of motivation and environment.

- talented in one or more areas; or
- twice exceptional: refers to students who have a gift or talents and one or more disabilities

Acceleration: Acceleration is a process of increasing the pace of learning, for example by placing a student (on enrolment or at any point in a student's schooling) ahead of his or her chronological age or school year in one or more subjects.

Compacted Curriculum: A form of acceleration that allows students to complete curriculum in a shorter timeframe through increased pace of instruction and by minimising repetitive demonstration of mastery.

Curriculum: Curriculum pertains to any learning content, processes and programs occurring within the schooling context, including but not limited to classroom curriculum and co-curricular educational opportunities.

Data Informed Teaching: Data Informed Teaching involves a three step process, entailing collection of data on student performance, analysis of trends to determine the needs of individual students and cohorts, and the use of that data to inform teaching practice, in particular facilitate differentiation.

Differentiation: Curriculum differentiation involves tailoring content, process, product and environment (also referred to as curriculum, instruction and environment) in response to differences in students' learning needs, interests and levels of ability.

Early Entry: Early Entry refers to eligibility for early enrolment into Prep or early placement into a university course. *Guidelines for this placement process and consultative requirements are specified in this Policy Statement.

Extension: Extension involves extending students' knowledge and skills by deepening their understanding through higher order thinking and/or increased complexity of content (e.g. through project based learning, portfolios, creative tasks).

Inclusive Education: Inclusive Education entails education which promotes a culture of inclusion through the provision of support, educational adjustments, and educational opportunities, ensuring equitable access to the curriculum for all students.

Zone of Proximal Development: The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).²⁰