

Gifted and Talented Policy

Date: May 2015

1. Rationale

All children are entitled to an education that is engaging, challenging and helps them to reach their full potential. Williamstown North Primary School (WNPS) is committed to providing a challenging and engaging curriculum that is sufficiently differentiated in order to meet the needs of all students.

WNPS recognises that the learning needs of 'gifted and talented' students may differ dramatically from those of other students. These students benefit from being empowered to learn at their own pace, study independently, tackle complex content, and opportunities to use high order thinking and problem-solving skills. Conversely, if these special learning needs are not met, these students may disengage from education and may not reach their full potential.

The school also recognises that gifted and talented students may have unique social and emotional needs which must be met, in addition to their academic needs.

2. Aims

This policy embodies the WNPS's commitment to provide the school's gifted and talented students with supportive and challenging learning environments and opportunities that are responsive to their individual strengths and interests.

This policy will ensure that:

- 2.1 Equitable and objective procedures are implemented to identify gifted and talented students.
- 2.2 Gifted and talented students are challenged and extended so that they are engaged and motivated in all aspects of their learning.
- 2.3 Differentiated and personalised learning programs are implemented that cater for the individual learning needs of gifted and talented students.
- 2.4 Enrichment activities are provided that promote higher order thinking and empower gifted and talented students to make a difference with their learning.
- 2.5 Staff have access to professional learning in the area of gifted education.
- 2.6 Parents and guardians have opportunities to be involved in the education of their gifted and talented child/ren.
- 2.7 The importance of gifted and talented education is conveyed to the school community and high achievement across all domains is celebrated.

3. Definitions

Gifted students possess outstanding natural intellectual, physical, creative or social abilities in one or more areas and have the potential to perform at a significantly higher level than their age-peers.

Talented students are those who demonstrate outstanding mastery of systematically developed knowledge and skills in generally one particular area.

4. Policy Context

This policy has been developed within the context of *Aiming High: A strategy for gifted and talented children and young people, 2014 – 2019*, prepared by the State Government, which outlines a number of actions that will support Victoria's gifted and talented children and young people to reach their potential.

In particular, the strategy encourages the development of a school-level Gifted and Talented Education Policy, which may address identification, extension and enrichment, acceleration and ability grouping, connecting students with 'like minds' and evaluation.

5. Implementation

5.1 Identifying gifted students

Identifying a student's giftedness is an important first step in ensuring that his or her educational needs are addressed. Where parents/guardians or outside agencies regard a student to be 'gifted' they will first consult with the classroom teacher. Where the classroom teacher believes a child to be 'gifted', they will first consult with a member of the school's leadership team.

A variety of identification methods will be utilised to determine students of high intellectual potential. A range of criteria and a balance of formal and anecdotal assessment procedures will be used. These may include:

- teacher observation and assessment of performance
- teacher devised tests
- parent observation
- checklists of traits and characteristics
- cumulative school history
- anecdotal evidence
- standardised achievement tests
- tests of cognitive/intellectual ability
- external testing.

Information regarding Gifted and Talented students will be communicated to the classroom teacher via each student's individual file.

5.2 Enrichment and Extension Activities for Gifted Students

A range of classroom enrichment and extension activities are implemented to meet the diverse needs of gifted and talented students. These may include but are not limited to: -

- De Bono's Thinking Tools (specific activities designed to encourage students to approach problems in a variety of ways).
- Bloom's Taxonomy and Gardiner's Multiple Intelligences (planning tools to assist teachers to plan activities based on student preferred learning styles).
- Flexible classroom ability groupings such as fluid grouping structures in literacy and numeracy.
- Close tracking of students with pre and post test data.

A range of enrichment programs outside of the classroom environment will be offered. These may include, but are not limited to: -

- Tournament of Minds (TOM)
- International Competitions & Assessments for Schools (ICAS)
- Glee Club and school musical
- Sporting activities
- G.A.T.E.WAYS (Gifted and Talented Education Ways) Program.

5.3 Individual Learning Plans (ILP)

Individual learning plans (ILP) will be used for providing targeted and more personalised learning. An individual learning plan is a document that sets out strategies or goals for a student's education based on their academic, social or emotional needs at any point of time.

Learning activities identified in the student's ILP will encourage the development of:

- abstract and higher order thinking skills
- independent thinking and open inquiry
- problem solving skills
- research skills
- self-understanding
 - presenting ideas and products that challenge existing ideas
 - focusing on open-ended tasks
 - encouraging resource based learning
 - providing appropriate enrichment and extension activities.

An ILP will be developed for a student in consultation with the student's parents/guardians and monitored on a term-by-term basis.

5.4 Staff Professional Learning

Staff will be provided with professional learning opportunities to develop their skills in identifying and providing appropriate educational programs for gifted and talented students. This includes skill development in identifying and supporting underperforming and disengaged students.

Staff will also be provided with a range of resources for classroom enrichment and extension activities, identification checklists, articles, information, web sites and references.

5.5 Support for gifted students and their families

To aid their social and emotional well-being, gifted and talented students will be supported in their journey through WNPS via access to information, support and counselling (via Student Support Services), as well as opportunities to learn and socialise with other gifted and talented students.

Through the school's inclusion journey over the past few years there is a strong culture of acceptance of diversity within the school community.

Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to participate in catering for the needs of their gifted and talented child/ren through access to information about external programs and activities (via the school newsletter), together with the provision of expert advice (if required).

Where external programs and activities are deemed suitable for specific children, their parents/guardians will be advised accordingly.

5.6 Promotion of positive attitudes to giftedness

The school will recognise and celebrate the efforts of Gifted and Talented students by acknowledging their academic achievements at school assemblies, newsletters and other forums. For instance, ICAS awards are presented at school assemblies.

5.7 Acceleration of Gifted and Talented Students

Acceleration is an intervention that moves students through an educational program at a faster than usual rate or younger than typical age. Accelerated learning can take different forms such as:

Early entry to primary school - A student enters primary school at a younger age than the prescribed age.

Subject acceleration - A student moves up a grade (or more) in one subject but stays with their regular class for their other subjects.

Year level acceleration - A student skips an entire grade (or more than one grade).

Telescoping - A student completes several years of the school's curriculum in less time.

Guidelines for Year level acceleration are documented in Appendix 1: "Protocol for Full-Year Level Acceleration of Students."

Early entry into primary school for gifted and talented children is undertaken in consultation with the Department of Education and Training's regional office.

6. Evaluation and Review

This policy shall be reviewed as part of the WNPS' cyclical policy review process conducted by school council and updated if required. The school will also regularly evaluate the support provided to its gifted and talented students.

7. References and Related Policies

Aiming High: A strategy for gifted and talented children and young people, 2014 – 2019.

Assessment and Reporting Policy and Procedures.

Student Engagement Policy and Procedures

Family Engagement Policy

This Policy was ratified by School Council on 20 May 2015.

Protocol for Full-Year Level Acceleration of Students

Preface:

Before a student is considered for full-year level acceleration, the following criteria must be met:

- The student must want to be a participant to the acceleration recommendation;
- The student must be achieving academically in the top 5% (95th percentile) of their age group, and
- The student's cognitive ability must be assessed as two or more standard deviations above the mean.

Extensive collaboration will be undertaken when considering a student for acceleration. This may include the following strategies:

1. Parent/s discuss with the class teacher.
2. Class teacher to discuss with appropriate staff, which may include the team leader, the student's past teachers, etc.
3. Academic skill levels determined through testing, collection of student's work and teacher observation.
4. Discussion with the Principal and Assistant Principal.
5. Meeting between parent/s, class teacher and relevant parties to take place. If no previous educational and cognitive testing has taken place, this would be highly recommended at this stage.
6. Further meeting of WNPS relevant parties to take place to discuss recommendation.
7. Recommendation is made to Principal.
8. Principal to consider recommendation and inform parents.

The opportunity for discussion with parents will be available throughout the process. Written information including research reports on acceleration will be made available to parents.

Guidelines to determining gifted students' suitability for acceleration progression include:

- The student should be eager to move ahead and not be unduly pressured by parents.
- A comprehensive psychological evaluation of the student's intellectual functioning, academic skill level and social-emotional adjustment by a trained psychologist.
- Academically the student should demonstrate skill level above the average of the class she/he desires to enter.
- Socially and emotionally the student should be free of any serious adjustment problems. In this regard it is recognised that some gifted students' social and emotional difficulties may have been caused by inappropriately low grade placement. Judgements about the student's social and emotional security should include input from the student's parent/s and psychologist.
- Careful consideration should be given to the grade placement of the accelerated student.
- Where possible, advancement should only occur at natural transition points such as the beginning of a new school year.
- Decisions regarding accelerated progression should be based on research, e.g. The Iowa Acceleration Scale.