

# ABILITY GROUPING FOR *Gifted Students*



## Why it Matters?

Studies have found that when gifted students are ability-grouped with similarly motivated and intelligent peers, they advance as much as a whole year compared to students of a similar age and intelligence. This type of intellectual growth likely occurs because grouping allows gifted students to move at a pace appropriate for their abilities.

## Ability Groups

Below are a handful of the most commonly used types of ability groups, starting with those utilized in heterogeneous classes and moving toward full-time homogeneous grouping.

### Cluster groups

Cluster groups are a small-scale form of ability grouping that are used in mixed-ability classrooms. "Clustering" involves placing 5 to 10 gifted or high-achieving students in each regular education classroom, and then allowing this group to work together on accelerated materials, problem-solving activities, or assignments that develop higher-order thinking skills.

### Enrichment clusters

Enrichment clusters bring together smaller groups of students to work on special activities from several grades who share a common interest. Enrichment clusters are a great option for students who want to share their passion with like-minded students.

### Pullout programs

A popular and often successful method of bringing gifted students together, if only for a portion of the school week. These sessions are often guided by a district coordinator or a teacher who has special training in gifted education.

### School within a school (SWAS)

SWAS programs draw gifted students from around the district and places them in a school that also accommodates regular education students. Gifted students spend the majority of their day in accelerated classes that are appropriate for their abilities, but they mix with the rest of the school population for whole school activities and nonacademic subjects such as PE, music, and art.

### Magnet schools

Magnet schools offer specialized training in a variety of fields, including the arts, mathematics, technology, and certain vocations. Magnet schools draw motivated students from across the district and will often offer career counseling and placement in internships.

### Special schools for the gifted

These schools offer accelerated or enriched education on a full-time basis, and they are staffed with educators who understand the specific needs of gifted students.



Orange County Department of Education - GATE Program

Source: Ability Grouping for Gifted Students, Davidson Academy

