The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM) provides a comprehensive way to serve gifted students on a full-time basis while enhancing achievement opportunities for all students. The information on this form answers common questions about the SCGM.

**What does it mean to place students in cluster groups?**
A group of gifted-identified students is placed (“clustered”) into a mixed-ability classroom with a teacher who is trained to differentiate curriculum and instruction for gifted students.

**Isn’t cluster grouping the same as tracking?**
No. In tracking, students are grouped into classrooms with others of comparable ability and remain together throughout their school years. Curriculum is based on the ability of the average students in the class.

When clustered, all classes have a range of abilities. Teachers modify or extend grade-level standards according to the students’ needs and abilities.

**Why should gifted students be placed in a cluster group instead of being assigned to all classes?**
Gifted students:

- need to spend time learning with others of like ability to experience challenge and make academic progress
- better understand their learning differences when they are with like-ability peers

Teachers are more likely to differentiate curriculum when there is a group of gifted students in their classroom.

**What are the learning needs of gifted students?**
*All* students deserve consistent opportunities to learn new material. With gifted students, this means having opportunities to engage in intellectually stimulating endeavors that go beyond grade-level curriculum.

**Why not create small groups of gifted students in all classes?**
The desired outcomes of the SCGM become greatly diminished when doing so because:

- Teachers have students with a range of abilities that is too broad.
- There are no opportunities for gifted-education leadership at the grade level.
- There is less accountability for teachers to facilitate progress of their gifted learners.
- Teachers feel a decreased need to identify gifted students.
- Students’ learning needs are less apparent.
- Providing appropriate teacher training becomes difficult.
Won’t the creation of a gifted-cluster group rob the other classes of academic leadership? Aren’t gifted students needed in all classes so they can help others learn?

- All classes have a group of gifted students or a group of high-achieving students, so every class has academic leaders.
- High-achieving students have new opportunities to become academic leaders.
- Gifted students make intuitive leaps and, therefore, do not always appear to have to work as hard as others. This means that gifted students are not always the best academic leaders for other students.

How does the SCGM fit with other inclusion models?

The SCGM and other inclusion models are totally compatible. For ease of scheduling and to ensure that students receive appropriate instruction by properly trained teachers, schools commonly cluster special education students according to the services they require. Gifted students’ unique learning needs can be readily served by the SCGM in the same way.

Will the presence of gifted students in the classroom inhibit learning for other students?

- Not when the gifted cluster is kept to a manageable size. Recommended gifted-cluster size is 4–9 students.
- New academic leadership is present in all classes, which actually raises the numbers of high achievers in the classrooms and the school.
- When learning extension opportunities are offered to all students in the class, expectations and levels of learning rise for all.

Are gifted-cluster groups “visible” in the classroom?

- Gifted-cluster groups are rarely distinguishable from other groups of students in the classroom.
- All students move in and out of groupings according to interest, ability, and pace regarding different topics.

How are records kept of the progress made by gifted-cluster students?

Gifted-cluster teachers keep Differentiated Education Plans (DEPs) for their gifted students. DEPs are simple checklists and narratives that suggest differentiation strategies teachers can use when planning instruction. They indicate students’ area(s) of strength and challenge and document students’ progress using the targeted strategies.

What are some advantages of cluster grouping?

- Grouping all gifted children in a regular classroom provides social, emotional, and academic advantages to students.
- Teachers can focus instruction to better meet all their students’ academic needs.
- Achievement rises for most students.
- Schools provide full-time gifted services with little additional cost.