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THE SCHOOLWIDE Cluster Grouping MODEL

Challenging Gifted Students and Improving Achievement for All

PART 1: Implementing and Supporting the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model

Dina Brulles, Ph.D.



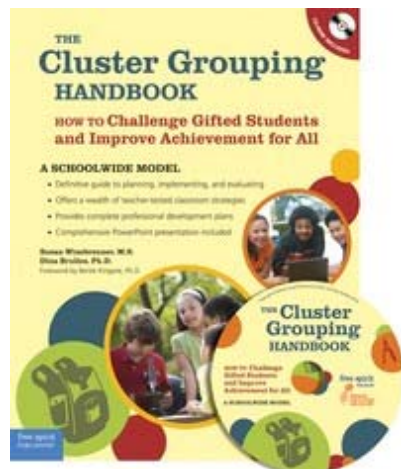
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Meet the Presenter:

Dina Brulles, Ph.D.

www.giftededucationconsultants.com



What is the SCGM?



A method for providing gifted services without major budget implications and with potential to raise achievement for all students.

With the SCGM,

All students are purposely placed into classrooms based on their abilities, potential, or achievement.

Overview of the SCGM

- Embraces diversity
- Expands gifted services
- Increases achievement
- Raises expectations for all students
- Attracts and retains smart students
- Costs little to nothing to implement

A Few Differences Between

Bright Children

and

Gifted Children

Know the answers

Ask the questions

Work hard

Play around, yet test well

Learn with ease

Already knows the answer

Need 6–8 reps for
mastery

Need 1–2 reps for
mastery

Enjoy school

Enjoy learning

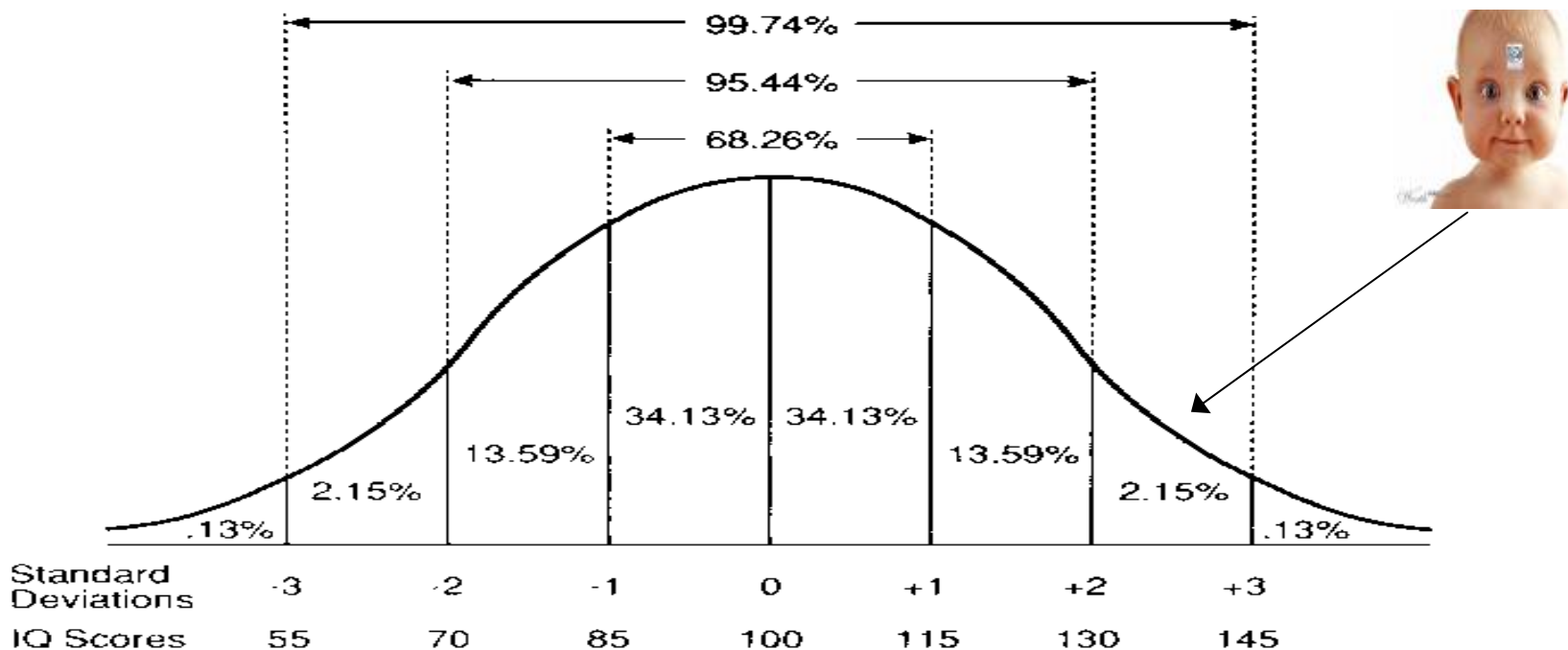
Who are the gifted?

How does giftedness impact students' social, emotional & academic needs?

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Figure 1
The Normal Distribution of IQ Scores



Scanné de : "SENSE AND NONSENSE ABOUT IQ"
Charles LOCURTO - Ed. Praeger (NY) 1991 - Page 5

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Effective gifted programs have:

- ✓ flexible grouping
- ✓ differentiation
- ✓ continuous progress
- ✓ intellectual peer interaction
- ✓ continuity
- ✓ teachers with specialized education

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What does it mean to place students
in cluster groups?



Gifted students at each grade level are clustered into a mixed-ability classroom with a teacher trained to work with gifted students.

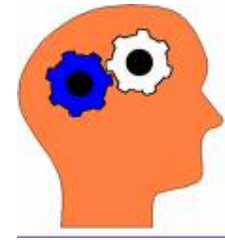
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Suggested classroom composition

| 30 Students in 3 Classes | Gifted | High Average | Average | Low Average | Far Below Average |
|-----------------------------|--------|-----------------|---------|----------------|----------------------|
| A | 6 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| B | 0 | 6 | 12 | 6 | 6 |
| C | 0 | 6 | 12 | 6 | 6 |

What are the learning needs
of gifted students?



All students deserve consistent opportunities
to learn new material.

How does the SCGM fit with other inclusion models?

In a similar way, the model...

- Eases scheduling
- Ensures instruction by properly trained teachers
- Reflects what occurs for Special Ed. & ELL students

Is cluster grouping the same as tracking?

No, in tracking...

- Students are placed in homogeneous groups
- Curriculum is based on each track
- Students remain in same track

Is cluster grouping the same as tracking?

No, in cluster grouping...

- All classes have a range of abilities
- Teachers modify grade-level standards
- Classroom composition changes yearly

Why should gifted students be placed in a cluster group?

When learning with peers,
gifted students...



- Experience challenge and make academic progress
- Feel accepted and understood

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Can I create small groups of gifted students in all classes?

The desired outcomes of the SCGM become diminished when doing so.



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

Why not create small groups of gifted students in all classes?

- Less accountability for teachers
- Decreased need to identify gifted students
- Teacher training becomes difficult

All teachers have the full range of abilities!

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Won't the creation of a cluster group
rob the other classes of academic
leadership?



All classes have smart kids, so all classes
have academic leaders.

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Aren't gifted students needed in all classes so they can help others learn?



This is not their responsibility, and most gifted kids are not very good at it!

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Are gifted clusters noticeable
in the classroom?



No, all students move in and out of groupings according to interest, ability, and pace regarding different topics.

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Gifted children typically...



- Are intensely curious & have many interests
- Learn quickly & have great memories
- Readily grasp underlying principles & make generalizations
- Sustain long periods of attention or concentration

These behaviors apply to all content areas, all day long.

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The SCGM enfranchises all gifted students...

- Creatively gifted people
- Gifted perfectionists
- Culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students
- Twice-exceptional gifted students
- Non-productive gifted students



What are some advantages?

- Social, emotional & academic benefits
- Narrowed range in class facilitates focused instruction
- Full-time attention to gifted with little cost
- Improved achievement for all

What are possible challenges?

- Parental pressure for placements
- Students identified during the school year
- Ensuring consistent differentiation occurs

Staffing the SCGM

- Gifted-cluster teachers at every grade
- Gifted mentor at every school
- Gifted coordinator at district level



Designate cluster teachers who:

- Understand & enjoy teaching gifted students
- Support inclusion
- Allow for student-directed learning
- Participate in professional development



Gifted-Cluster Teacher Responsibilities

- Differentiate curriculum and instruction
- Monitor gifted students' progress
- Participate in professional development

Gifted Mentor Responsibilities

- Hold a gifted endorsement
- Lead gifted-cluster teacher meetings
- Oversee schools' gifted testing
- Provide staff development at the schools

Gifted Coordinator Responsibilities

- Ideally has gifted certification
- Organizes professional development
- Monitors progress of the model
- Coordinates district gifted testing
- Analyzes student achievement

Cluster Teacher Training Formats

- Gifted mentor meetings
- Gifted-cluster teacher meetings at sites
- Districtwide gifted-cluster teacher meetings
- After-school workshops
- Teacher inservices
- Book studies: face-to-face & online
- Peer coaching



Professional Development Topics

- Identifying potential in all populations
- Teaching in the SCGM
- Differentiating curriculum instruction
- Using assessments to form flexible learning groups
- Encouraging critical and creative thinking

Gifted Mentor & Cluster Teacher Meetings

The gifted coordinator meets monthly with mentors for training, planning, and providing resources.

Gifted mentors meet monthly with cluster teachers at the sites for similar purposes.

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For a supportive school culture...

- Carefully balance the classrooms
- Provide information to teachers and parents
- Invite all teachers to participate in professional development



Parent Information

- Inform office staff of model and placements
- Provide information and FAQs on website
- Hold informational evenings for parents of gifted students
- Send letters home describing model and services

Planning with Principals and Staffs

- Present plans to staff and seek input
- Identify gifted-cluster teachers
- Identify students to be placed into gifted-cluster groups
- Provide training for gifted-cluster teachers

The SCGM in Times of Lean Budgets

- No initial outlay of funds needed
- No additional staffing or materials needed
- Staff development benefits all students
- Retains smart students & increases school achievement levels

Benefits of the SCGM include:

- Challenging gifted students every day, all day
- Creating learning and leadership opportunity for *all* students
- Empowering all teachers by expanding awareness and providing preparation
- On going assessment of students' strengths and needs
- All students have opportunities for extended learning

**Gifted Ed. becomes part of the school culture!*

Showing Growth in the SCGM

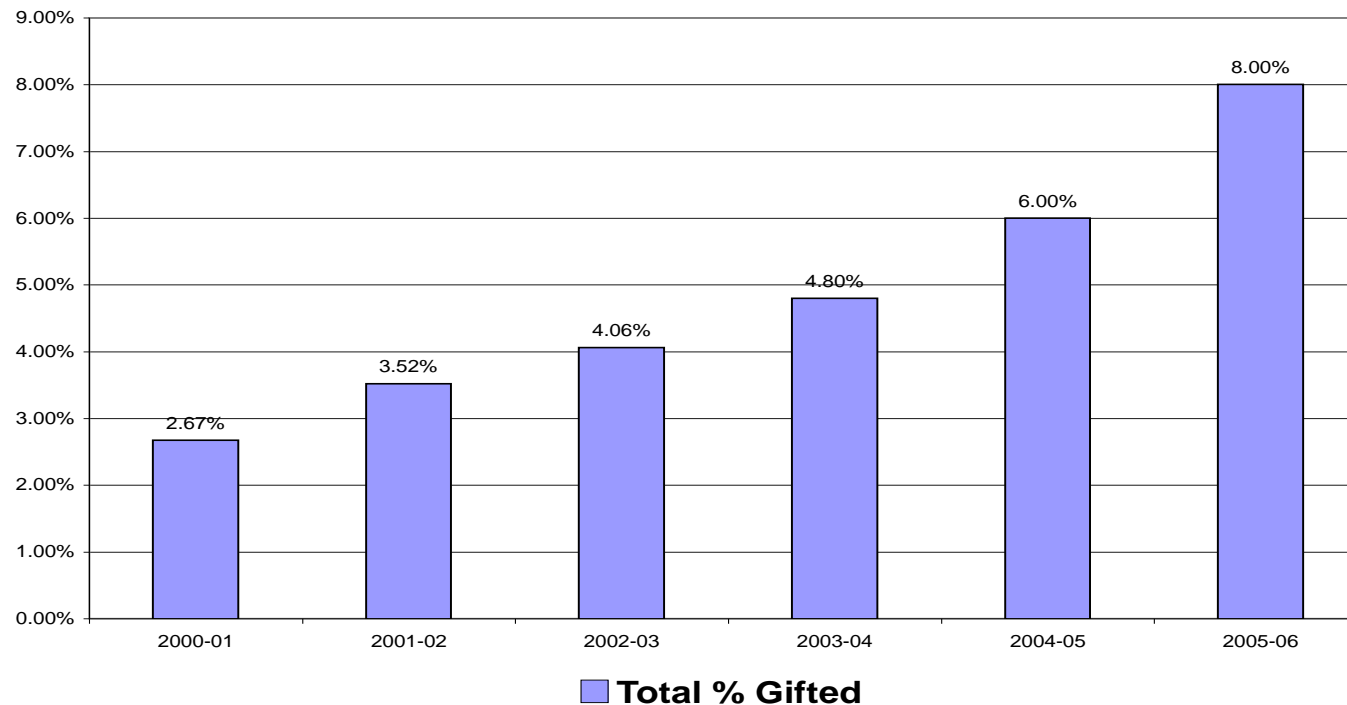
Schools can track ongoing growth by measuring:

- Academic achievement
 - Gifted population identified and served by year
 - Ethnic representation of gifted students
 - Teachers participating in gifted education training
- ❖ *This requires first creating a gifted student database.*

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Case Study: Glendale, AZ, 2000–06



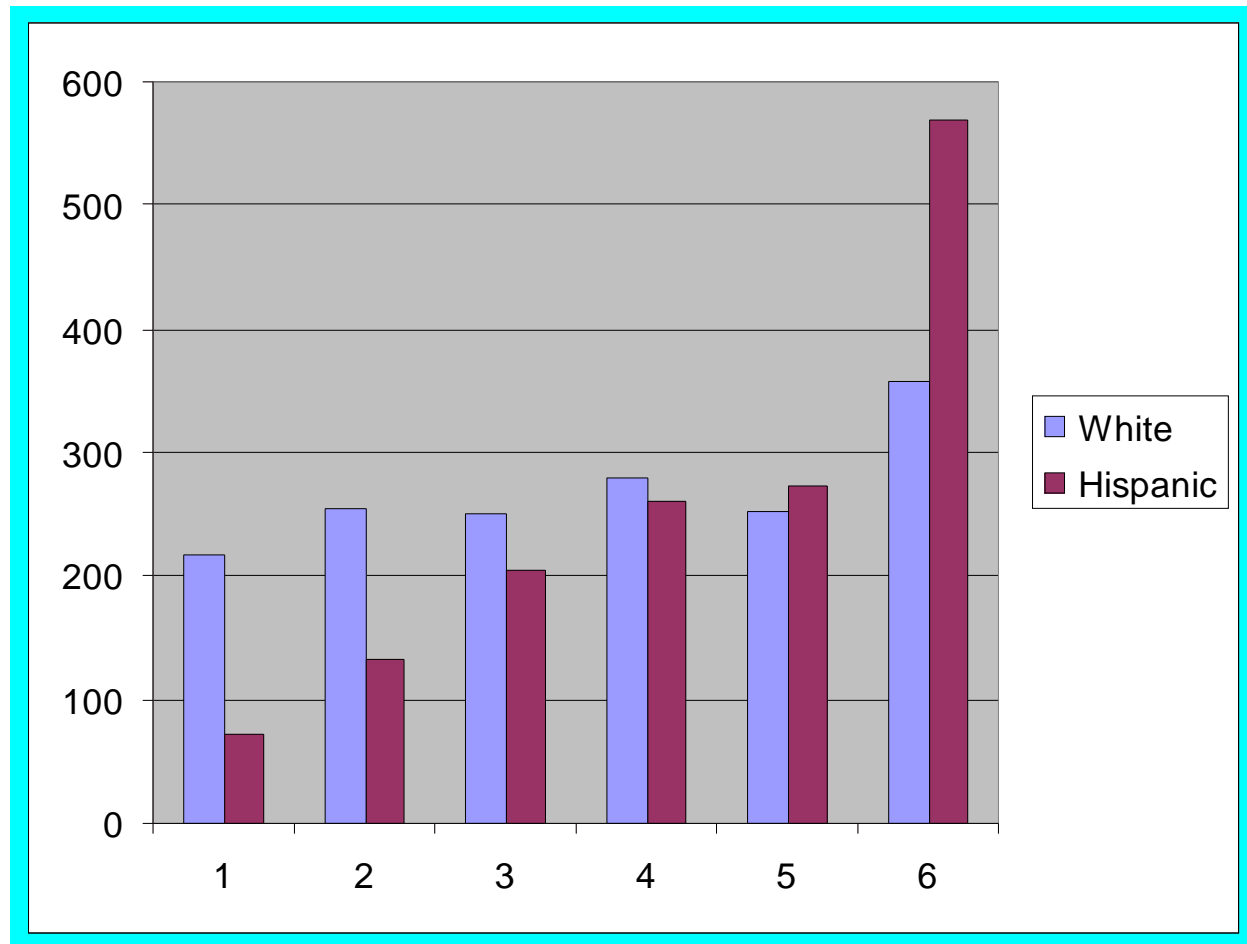
Gifted Population ~ Growth by Year using the SCGM & NNAT

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Glendale,
AZ
2000–06

Gifted population
by ethnic
breakdown of
White and Hispanic
student populations



Achievement Implications



- Narrowed range of abilities allows for focused instruction
- Teachers use gifted strategies for all students
- On going assessments ensure continual progress
- Advanced learning opportunities are provided

Examining Academic Achievement

Gifted students:

in a cluster classroom vs. not cluster grouped

Other students:

in gifted-cluster classes vs. not in a cluster class

Academic Effects of Clustering and Non-Clustering Gifted Students in Mathematics



Journal for the Education of the Gifted

Winter 2010

Improving Performance for Gifted Students in a Cluster Grouping Model

Dina Brulles
Sanford J. Cohn
Arizona State University

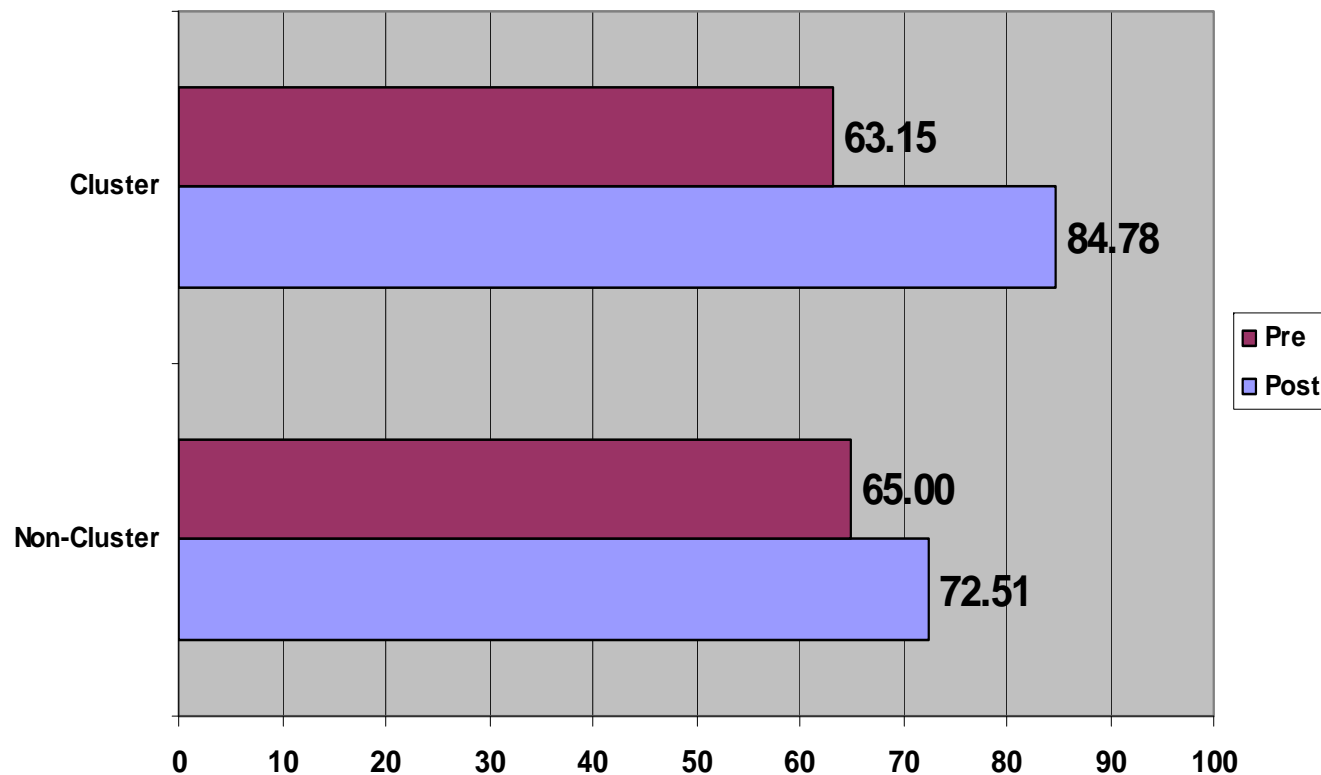
Rachel Saunders
Cartwright Elementary School District, Arizona

Although experts in gifted education widely promote cluster grouping gifted students, little empirical evidence is available to attest to its effectiveness. This study is an example of comparative action research in the form of a quantitative case study that focused on the mandated cluster grouping practices for gifted students in an urban elementary school district. Some school administrators chose not to follow the model as designed, resulting in the emergence of two groups: gifted students in cluster-grouped classrooms and those in regular heterogeneous classrooms. This action research project analyzed achievement in mathematics for subgroups that included gender, grade levels, ethnicity, and English language learner status. Results indicate that the gifted students in gifted cluster classes demonstrated statistically significant and scientifically meaningful achievement growth, regardless of their demographic group.

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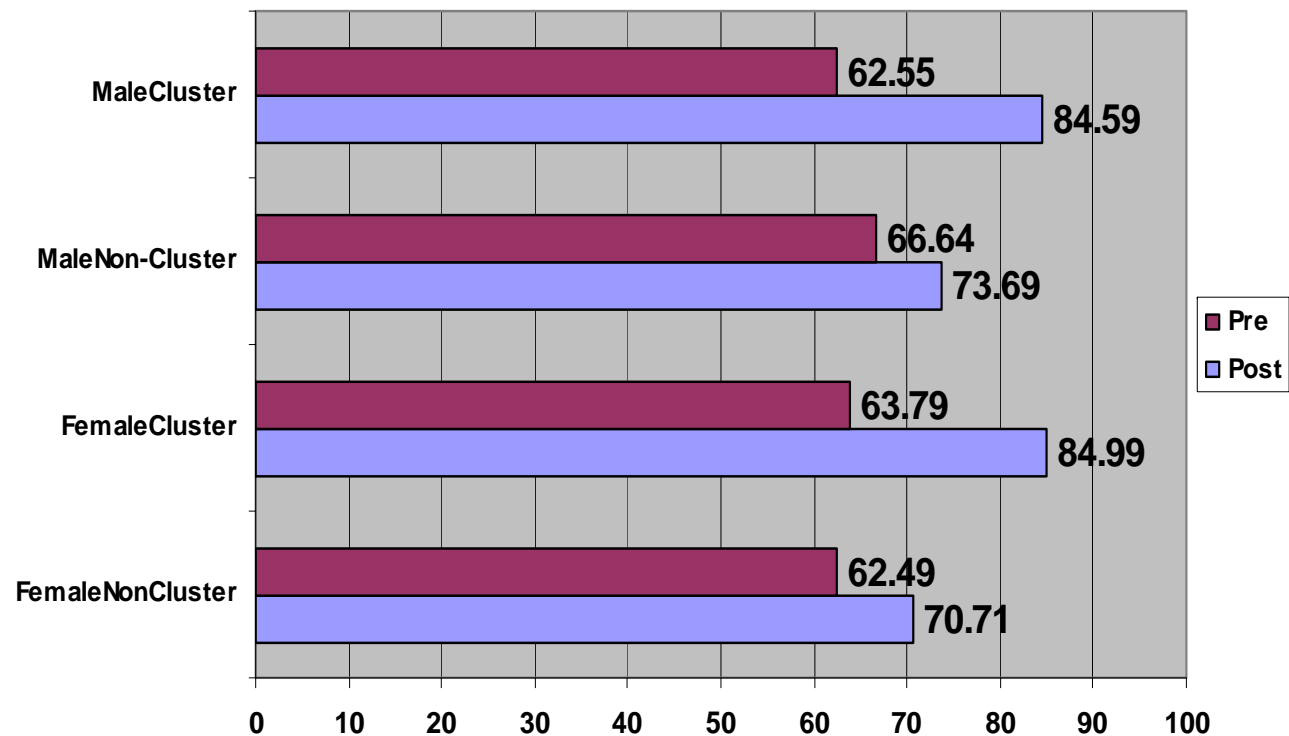
Overall Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering for Gifted Students



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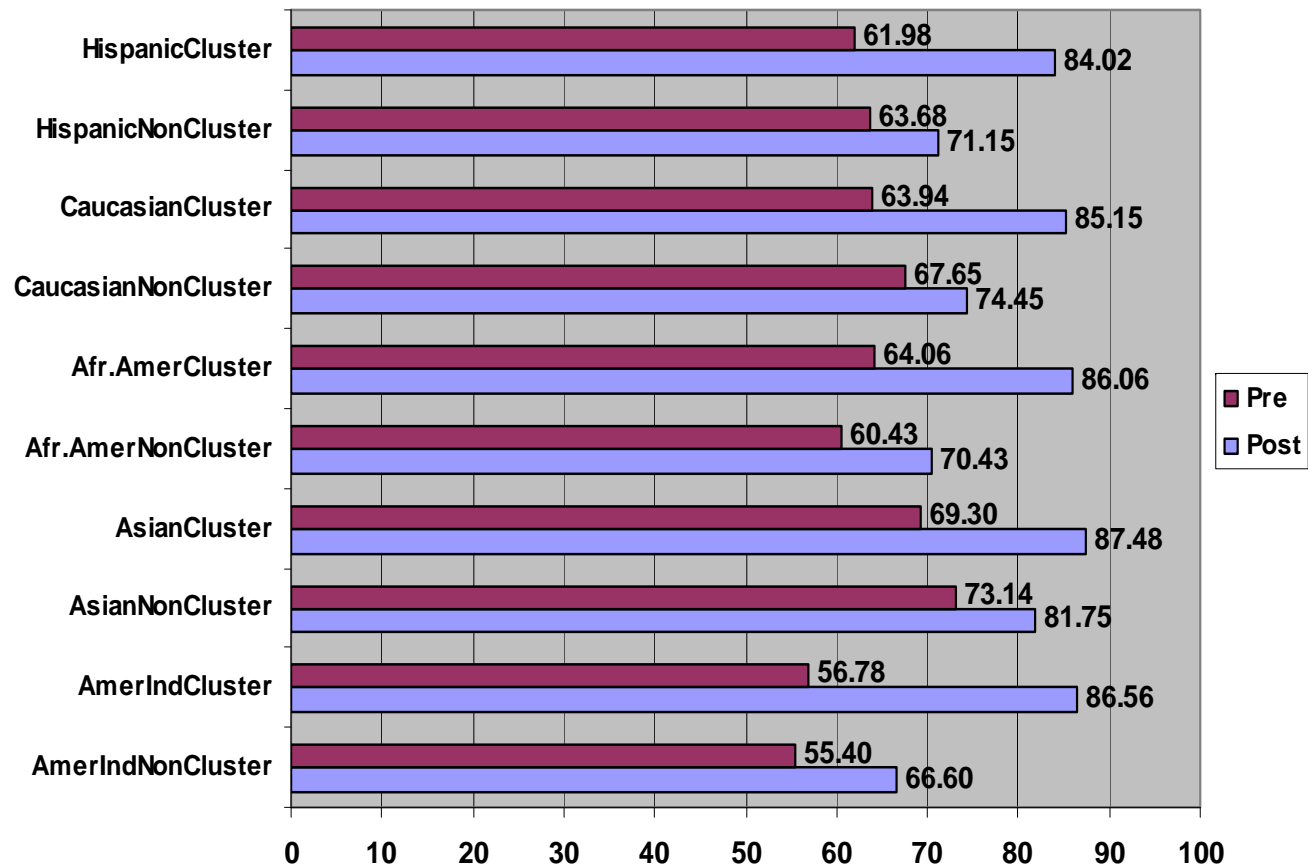
Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering Based on Gender



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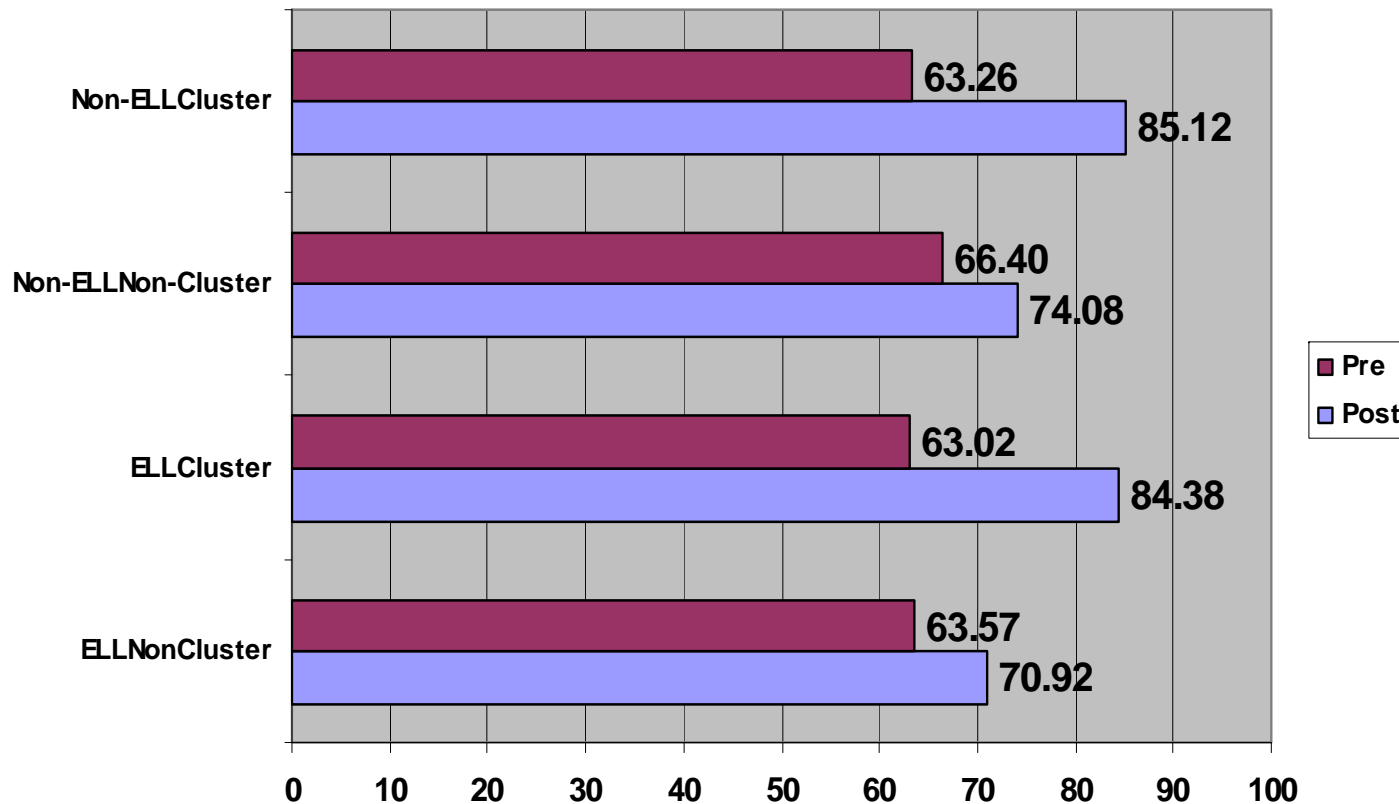
Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering Based on Ethnicity



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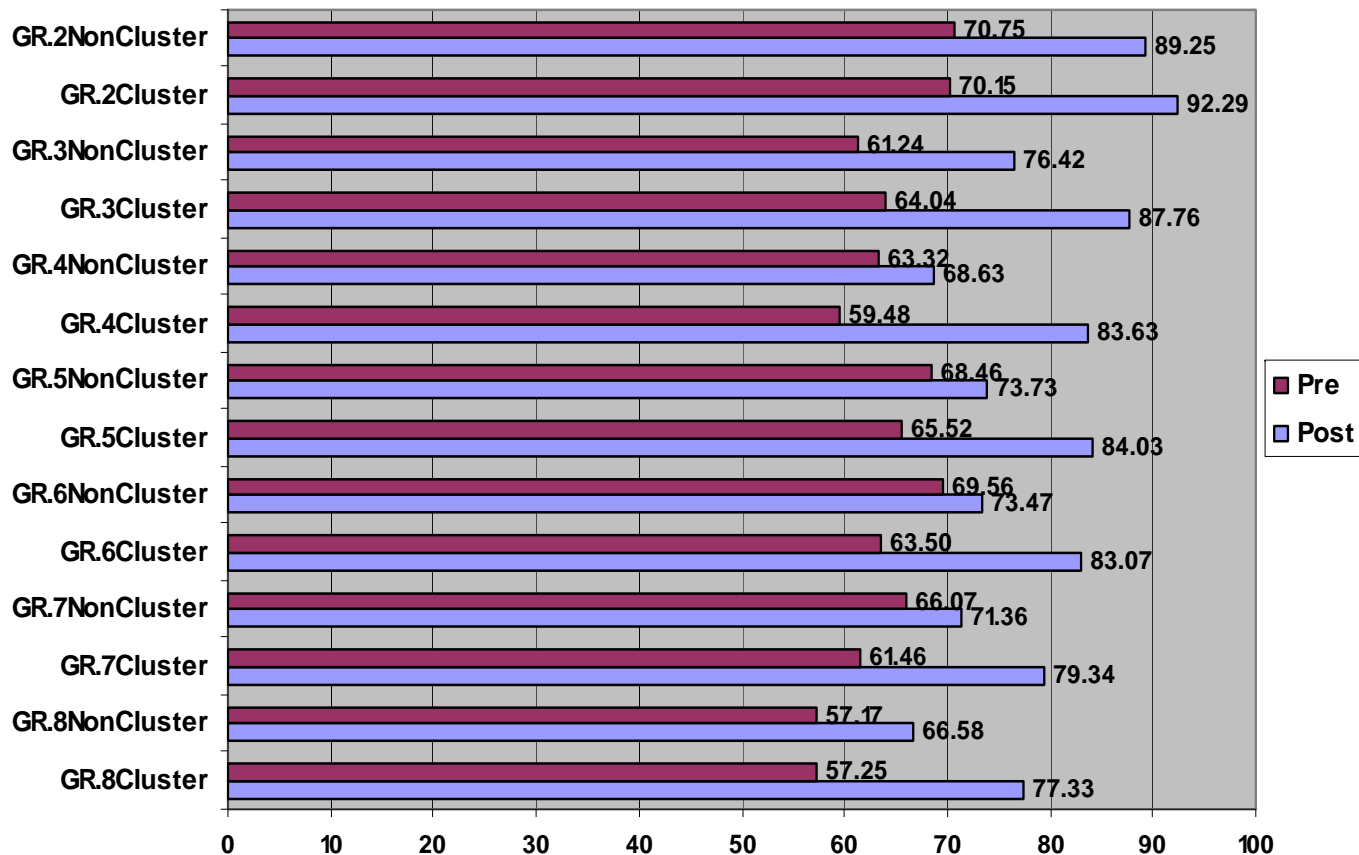
Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering Based on
ELL/Non-ELL Status



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Academic Effects of Clustering Based on Grade Level



Academic Effects of the Cluster Grouping Model on Not Identified as Gifted Students in Mathematics



Number of Participants in Study

Total Number of Students: 3,162

Students in Cluster Classroom: 535

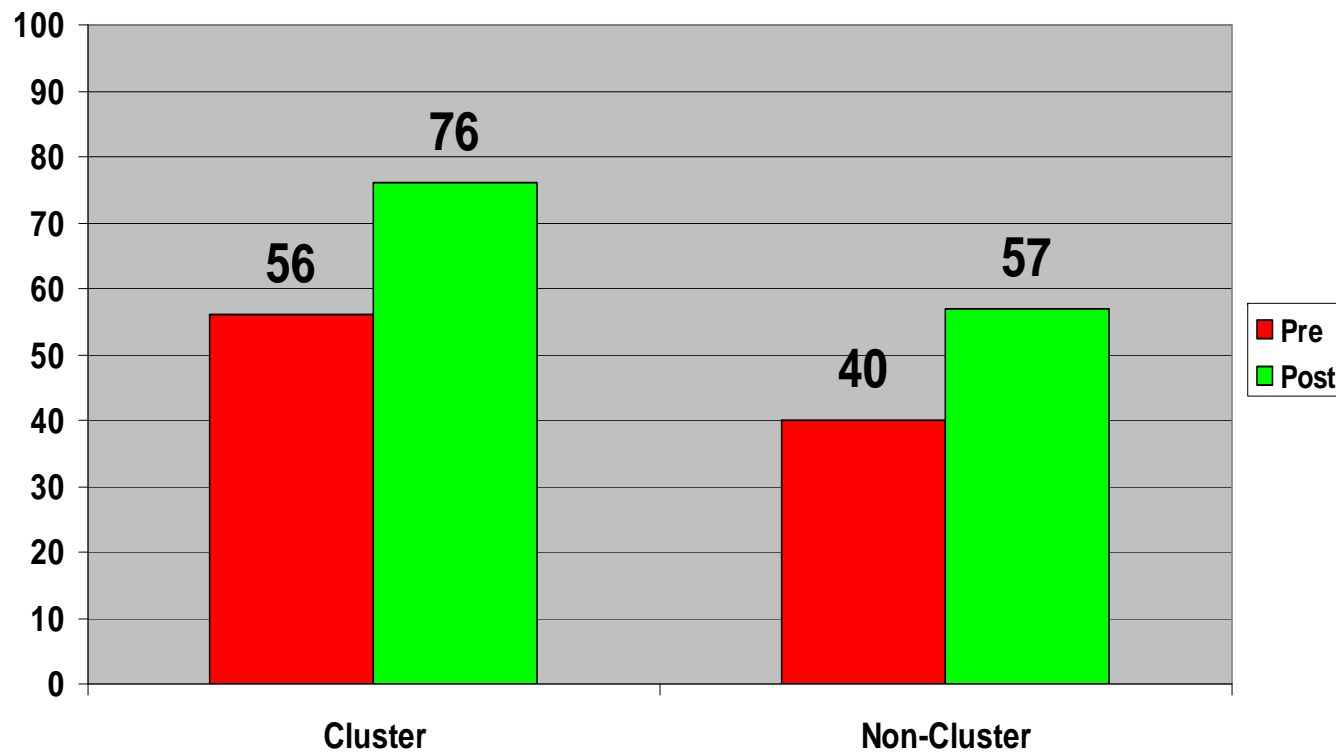
Non-Cluster Classroom: 2,627

Students who participated in this study were not identified as gifted.

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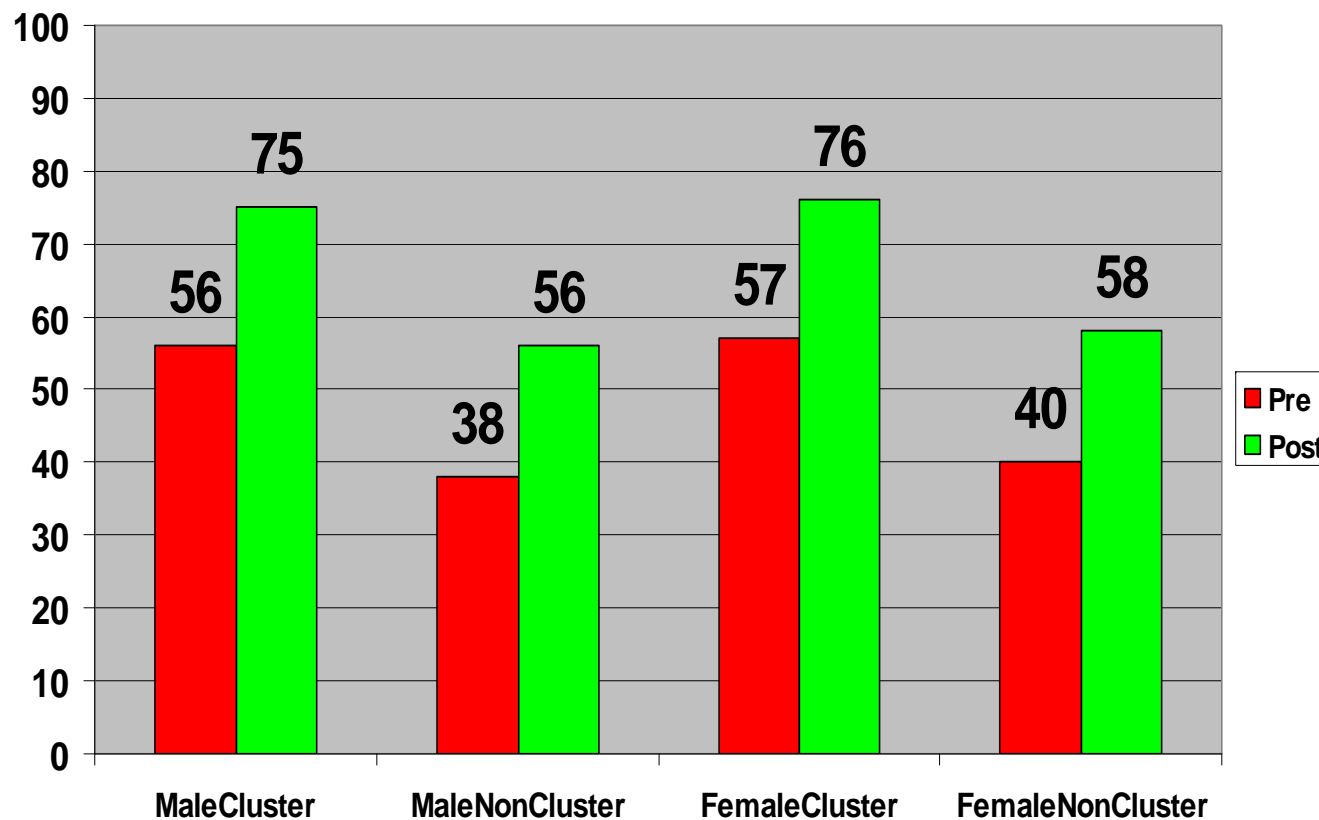
Overall Academic Effects of the Cluster Model on Students Not Identified as Gifted



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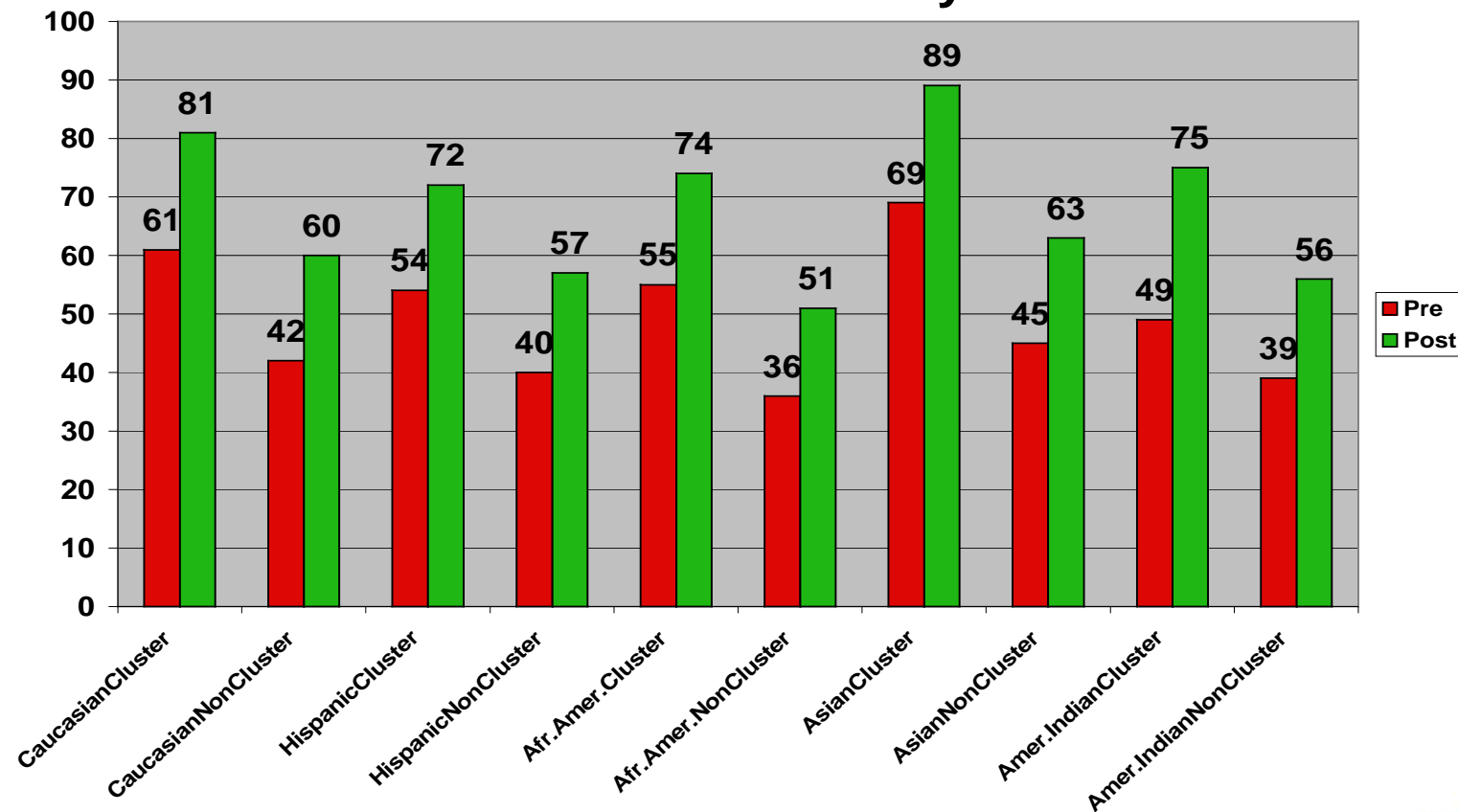
Overall Academic Effects of the Cluster Model Based on Gender



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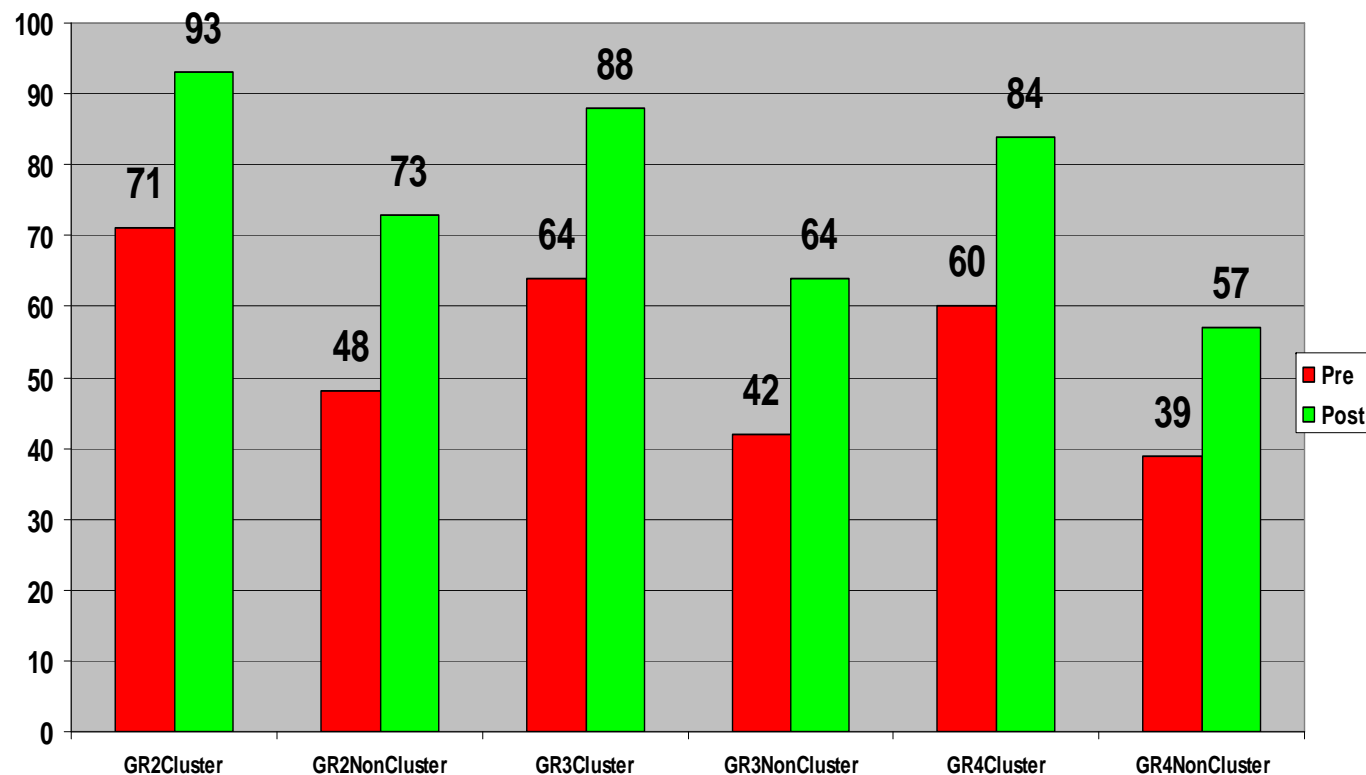
Overall Academic Effects of the Cluster Model Based on Ethnicity



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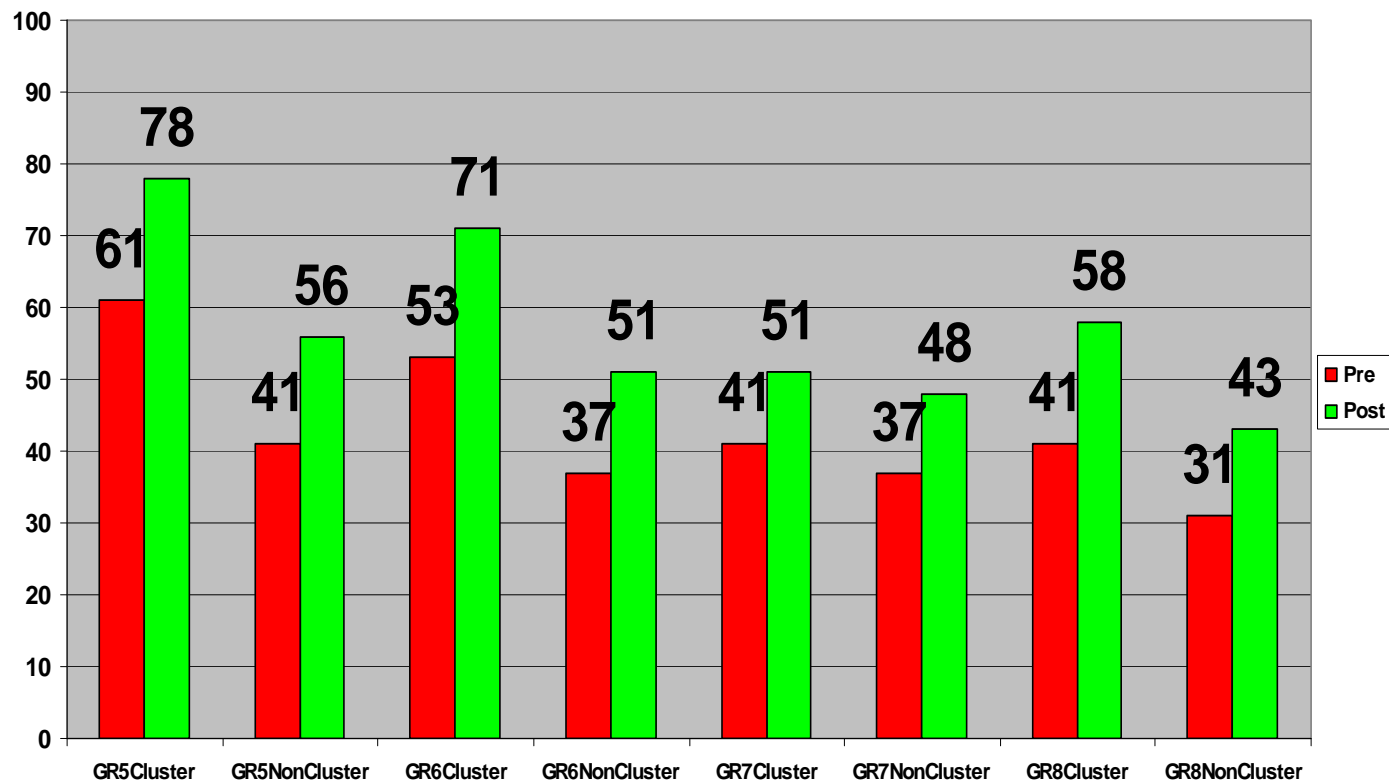
Overall Academic Effects of the Cluster Model Based
on Grade Level (2-4)



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Overall Academic Effects of the Cluster Model Based on Grade Level (5-8)



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Thank you!

Contact Dina Brulles, Ph.D.:

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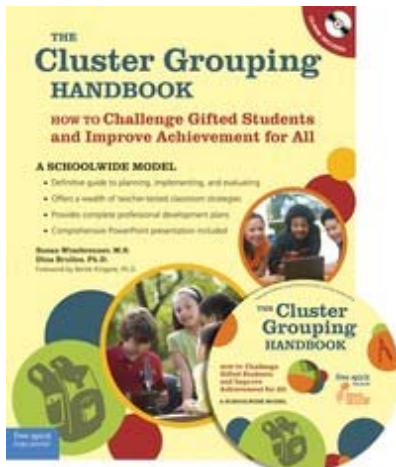


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Bonus Handouts and Special Offer

Find **bonus handouts** and a coupon code for **20% off** *The Cluster Grouping Handbook*.



Visit www.freespirit.com/DinaBrulles.