Alstonville High School

Gifted & Talented Policy 2011
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School Context

Alstonville High School is a comprehensive public school that endeavours to nurture the academic, physical, social and emotional well-being of students; instil the core values of integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, fairness and consideration for others among all students. The school offers a differentiated curriculum with a range of enrichment, extension and extra-curricular programs. Our success across all areas of school life is recognised by our excellent HSC results, success in Mathematics, Science, English and Computing competitions; presence in Art express and Design & Technology exhibitions; debating and public speaking awards and zone, regional and state sporting representation. Student wellbeing and the recognition of students as global citizens is catered for by numerous proactive welfare initiatives across all years and the development of a highly successful student volunteering program to complement traditional programs such as a highly effective and visible Student Representative Council.

School Purpose

Alstonville High School seeks to provide a learning environment that both challenges and supports gifted and talented students to pursue excellence and develop a lifelong passion for learning in accordance with the values outlined in the wellbeing policy.

Definitions

3.1 Gifted and Talented Students

The school policy adopts the DET definitions of giftedness and talent based on Gagné’s (2003) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT).

Gifted students are those whose potential is distinctly above average in one or more of the following domains of human ability: intellectual, creative, social and physical to a degree that places an individual among the top 10% of their age peers

Talented students are those whose skills are distinctly above average in one or more areas of human performance to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers who are or have been active in that field or fields

Gagné’s model recognises giftedness as a broad concept that encompasses various abilities including intellectual, creative, leadership, social and physical skills. Gifted and talented students vary in terms of the nature and level of their abilities. It is critical that gifted and talented students be given appropriate opportunity, stimulation and experiences to develop their potential. The translation of giftedness into talent results from application to appropriate opportunities for learning, training and practice.

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It is important for school community to be sensitive to catalysts and impediments that can help or hinder the recognition of giftedness and the development of talent in young people. These include intra-personal and environmental factors:

**Intra-personal factors**
- Motivation
- Self-management
- Self-esteem
- Self-efficacy
- Poor health and disability
- Learning difficulties
- Language proficiency

**Environmental factors**
- Socio-economic background
- Beliefs about giftedness and talent
- Inter-personal relationships
- Events
- Teacher expectations
- Teaching practices
- Learning activities

The recognition of gifts and the development of particular talents may be affected by a student’s cultural identity. Gifts and talents need to be viewed from multiple perspectives reflecting the values and beliefs of different cultures.

### 3.2 Underachievement

If students are not working to their potential in school they are underachieving. Underachievement is defined as a discrepancy between a student’s school performance and some index of the student’s natural ability. Many factors may contribute to underachievement through intra-personal or environmental difficulties. Some students may deliberately underachieve for peer acceptance.

The problem of underachievement can be compounded by inadequate identification procedures, resulting in the problem of ‘invisible underachievement’. Some gifted students may not be identified because social-emotional issues or lack of metacognitive skills affect their performance.

Gagné’s model provides an eloquent mechanism to explain how underachievement occurs: if the catalysts necessary to convert potential or performance are absent, negative or weak it is highly likely that gifts will not full develop into equivalent levels of performance, ie, talents.
3.3 Highly Gifted Students
Highly gifted students share the following characteristics:

Cognitive (Thinking) Characteristics
- An extraordinary speed in processing information.
- A rapid and thorough comprehension of the whole idea or concept.
- An unusual ability to perceive essential elements and underlying structures and patterns in relationships and ideas.
- A need for precision in thinking and expression, resulting in a need to correct errors and argue intensively.
- An ability to relate a broad range of ideas and synthesise commonalities among them.
- A highly degree of ability to think abstractly that develops early.
- Appreciation of complexity; finding myriad alternative meanings in even the most simple issues or problems.
- An extraordinary degree of intellectual curiosity.
- An unusual capacity for memory.
- A long concentration span.
- A fascination with ideas and words.
- An extensive vocabulary.
- An ability from an early age to think in metaphors and symbols and a preference for doing so.
- An ability to perceive many sides of an issue.
- Argumentativeness.

Physical (Sensation) Characteristics:
- Advanced visual and motor skills.
- An extraordinarily high energy level.

Intuitive Characteristics:
- An ability to learn in great intuitive leaps.
- An ability to learn in an integrative, intuitive nonlinear manner.
- Highly idiosyncratic interpretations of events.
- An ability to visualise models and systems.
- An awareness of detail.

Affective (Feeling) Characteristics:
- An unusual intensity and depth of feeling.
- A high degree of emotional sensitivity.
- An ability to empathetically understand and relate to ideas and other people.

Societal Characteristics:
- Highly developed morals and ethics and early concern for moral and existential issues.
- Unusual and early insight into social and moral issues.
- A need for the world to be logical and fair.
- A conviction of correctness of personal ideas and beliefs.
Policy Statement

All gifted and talented students need a learning environment that fosters wellbeing and learning outcomes consistent with their abilities. The learning environment should provide educational pathways including appropriately challenging curriculum enrichment, extension and acceleration experiences, and foster socio-emotional development of gifted learners.

The school principal, in consultation with parents/caregivers, teachers, school counsellor and other appropriate personnel, has the prime responsibility for decisions in relation to the education of gifted and talented students.

Following are the key elements of Policy for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students at Alstonville High School:

1. School, with support, has a responsibility to identify and assess gifted and talented students in its classes, and in particular those who are exhibiting characteristics of gifted and talented but may be underachieving.

2. School has a responsibility to provide a range of learning opportunities and to monitor and evaluate programs for their gifted and talented students including Individual Learning Plans.

3. Teachers have a responsibility to select and implement a variety of provisions in programs for the range of gifted and talented students in their classes.

4. School has a responsibility to foster wellbeing of gifted learners in order to maximize their potential.

5. School has a responsibility to recognize excellence in student achievement.

6. School has a responsibility to foster collaborative home–school partnerships to support gifted and talented students.

7. School has a responsibility to provide opportunities for staff development in the education of gifted and talented students for principal, teachers and other appropriate personnel.
Procedures and Standards
A variety of provisions for gifted and talented students is outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provisions</th>
<th>Suggested Strategies and Current Practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum:</td>
<td><strong>Differentiated learning experiences.</strong> Gifted students need the opportunity to work through the curriculum at a faster pace and need less time on basics and revision.</td>
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<td>A differentiated curriculum is a program of activities that offers a variety of entry points for students who differ in abilities, knowledge and skills.</td>
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<td>In a differentiated curriculum teachers offer different approaches to what students learn (content), how students learn (process) and how students demonstrate what they have learned (product).</td>
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<td>There are numerous models of curriculum differentiation that can be applied creatively to produce programs that provide flexibility and choice, for the range of individual differences in the classroom. These include:</td>
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<td>• NSW Quality teaching framework</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Maker &amp; Williams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Gagne</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Kaplan</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bloom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension, Enrichment &amp; Acceleration</td>
<td>Alstonville High School has adopted Bloom’s Modified Taxonomy as a pedagogical model to provide a structured framework for curriculum delivery. This taxonomy can be regarded as a scaffold of learning from lower order thinking skills and content through to higher order thinking skills and content. It categorises learning into six levels (from lowest to highest):</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• Remembering</td>
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<td>• Understanding</td>
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<td>• Applying</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Analysing</td>
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<td>• Evaluating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• creating</td>
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<td></td>
<td>This strategy is to be embedded in programming and lesson plans across all KLA’s within the school.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Extension means providing opportunities at a greater level of challenge to the student. A combination of practices including acceleration, grouping and differentiation of the curriculum enable gifted students to access meaningful learning opportunities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enrichment means providing breadth to the curriculum at the same level of challenge to the student. All students should have access to enrichment at the appropriate intellectual level. However, appropriate enrichment for gifted students would not be suitable for all students.</td>
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<td>An example of the current practice of this provision is the “10% on Top”</td>
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<th>Competitions and University-based programs:</th>
<th>Offering greater <em>challenge</em> to students through a variety of programs such as:</th>
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<td>• Writing competitions</td>
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<td>• Science &amp; Engineering Challenge</td>
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<td>• Tournament of Minds</td>
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<td>• Mathematics and Science Olympiad</td>
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<td>• eGats</td>
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<td>• NCSS Programming Challenge</td>
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<td>• National competitions in English, Mathematics and Computing</td>
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<th>Embedding cognitive technologies into curriculum:</th>
<th>Using cognitive technologies as <em>collaborative thinking tools</em>. These may include:</th>
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<td>Mentoring:</td>
<td>Mentors who <em>work with students individually</em> on their area of interest. Mentors can be drawn from within the school and the broader community.</td>
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<td>Community enrichment opportunities:</td>
<td>These could include:</td>
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<td>• Parent groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Community agencies such as museums, galleries and camps to provide special opportunities for gifted students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Private agencies that offer special programs for gifted students including:</td>
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<td>• NCSS summer schools</td>
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<td>• Music camps</td>
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<td>• Sporting programs</td>
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<td>Counselling</td>
<td>The school counsellor <em>acts as an advocate</em> who appreciates the special needs of highly gifted students and gifted underachievers.</td>
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Supportive Strategies

Identification Methodology

Any identification process must allow for identification of all types of students including gifted underachievers and those who may be disadvantaged. It therefore needs to:

- be school-wide
- use multiple criteria
- be inclusive
- be dynamic and continuous
- be culturally fair
- ensure all domains of giftedness and fields of talent are identified
- recognises degree of giftedness and talent
- be organised and linked to differentiation
- allow for early identification at all stages
- enable input from everyone involved

A range of documentation may be collected about students. This may comprise:

- Teacher nomination
- Parent nomination
- Peer nomination
- Self-nomination
- Naplan / ESSA results
- Performance in school based assessment such as exams, class tasks
- IQ tests and other off site testing
- Recommendation from feeder primary schools

Nomination forms are available at the school.

Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

Gifted and Talented students who are underachieving or those who are profoundly gifted may require an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). This needs to be developed collaboratively with teachers, the student, parents/caregivers and other relevant professionals. An ILP is valuable for gifted and talented learners who:

- Are assessed as being in the intellectually gifted range at the 98\textsuperscript{th} percentile or above and are capable of working at a significantly higher level than their age peers.
- Are underachieving in one or more key learning areas
- Require provisions beyond those offered within their class
- Display uneven development with a significant gap between areas such as verbal and non-verbal performance or having learning difficulties that require targeted support.
- Require significant social/emotional support
- Socio-economically disadvantaged
- Are from an aboriginal or non-English speaking background

An ILP is intended for use over an extended period of time and is kept on the school intranet for teachers to access. The ILP is monitored by the Year Advisor, the Gifted & Talented Head Teacher and /or the welfare and equity Head Teacher.

School Wellbeing Policy
Alstonville High School provides a caring and challenging educational environment in which each student is encouraged towards self-fulfilment, concern for others and the cooperative pursuit of excellence. This policy is implemented under the umbrella of the Positive Behaviour Learning Program with the 3 key elements of respect, responsibility and participation.

Welfare curriculum provisions cater for the cognitive, affective, intuitive and societal characteristics of all students with a particular emphasis on those with special learning needs. This includes gifted learners, especially those who may be underachieving.

Collaborative Home-school Partnerships
Parents /caregivers can provide useful and reliable information about the abilities and characteristics of their children. It is important that information from parents/caregivers is collected throughout the student’s time at the school.

Communication channels can include:

- Newsletters
- Student diaries
- Parent/teacher evenings
- Parent workshops
- One to one conferences with parents
- Sharing Individual Learning Plans of the students

Recording information provided by parents/caregivers helps reduce the risk of underachievement and improves opportunities for effective provisions for gifted and talented students.

Providing opportunities for staff development
The school will support the professional learning of staff in gifted education through a range of resources and opportunities. The professional learning component of the school management plan is to include the goals and strategies for training teachers and other school personnel in gifted and talented education and the professional learning team has the responsibility for implementing and evaluating this plan.