



NSWPPA POSITION – High Potential and Gifted Education (HPGE)

Background

The NSWPPA is committed to ensuring all students in NSW public schools receive the highest quality teaching and learning experiences including children who are identified as having high potential and/or are gifted. This includes differentiated quality learning experiences for these students by highly trained and well supported school leaders and teachers of these students in mainstream and Opportunity Classes across NSW public schools.

Historically, previous Gifted and Talented policies from 2004 and 1991 have left little evidence of impact in terms of schools' capacity to deliver learning at the point of challenge for our high potential and gifted students. It is indeed a fact that HR and funding support is afforded to students with additional learning needs and building capacity of teachers to progress their learning. The lack of evidence of implementation of these previous Gifted and Talented policies and the subsequent lack of professional learning for school leaders and teachers has left these cohorts of HPGE students learning needs being neglected.

The new High Potential and Gifted Education Policy was released in 2019 to:

- Reflect advances in research.
- Address widening excellence and equity gaps.
- Align with changes in strategic directions.
- Address emerging trends in NSW student achievement and data.
- Respond to a 2015 election commitment.

As part of the release of this policy the HPGE Advisory Group was formed in 2021 with the aims of:

- Strengthening collaboration and consultation.
- Sharing and communicating relevant information.
- Advising on initiating, planning and developing innovative curriculum projects.
- Including member representation from DELs, SPC, Federation of P&Cs, CESE and other related groups.

The release and implementation of the High Potential and Gifted Education Policy is being led by the HPGE P-12 Team, a group of highly committed experts and professionals in this field who have a passion for ensuring all schools across NSW embed the HPGE policy into each school ensuring that all high potential and gifted students are able to reach their full potential.

High potential and gifted education is recognized as a specialist area as per special education. These specialized areas, such as Disability, Aboriginal education and EALD etc), have dedicated specialized teams to lead and support school leaders and teachers to implement policies and strategies to ensure high quality differentiated learning to achieve student outcomes in all Key Learning Areas. This support is ongoing and sustained and needs be afforded to high potential and gifted students as per other specialized areas.

Rationale

The High Potential and Gifted Policy promotes engagement and challenge for every student, regardless of background, in every school across intellectual, creative, social-emotional and physical domains. It supports every student to achieve their educational potential, through talent development opportunities and differentiated teaching and learning practices to ensure their specific learning and wellbeing needs are met (HPGE Policy).

As stated in the HPGE Policy:

The NSW Department of Education is committed to supporting every student to achieve their potential as stated in the Education Act (NSW) 1990. (1.1 of the policy).

The Directors, Educational Leadership are tasked with the HPGE Policy to monitor, support and guide implementation of the policy in our schools (4.3.1 of the policy).

There are also significant responsibilities and delegations for principals to ensure the optimal talent development of these students across all domains of potential within supportive learning environments to develop the whole student (4.1.1, 4.1.10 of the policy) and to lead and support teachers in the assessment and identification of specific learning needs across all domains of potential and effective differentiation for these students (4.1.2 of the policy). Ongoing support from the HPGE P-12 Team is required if this is to occur effectively and with impact in all our schools as it is afforded to other specialized areas within our system.

For Australia to lead the knowledge economy of the 21st century, we need a culture of excellence where high achievement is expected, and challenge is celebrated. There is strong evidence to suggest that greater use of a suite of effective evidence-based practices is needed (eg. advanced learning pathways (including different forms of acceleration and mentorships), grouping, formative assessment, explicit teaching, extension and enrichment, and differentiation) to ensure that high potential and gifted students have the right opportunities to, reach their educational potential (Revisiting gifted education, CESE). This would assist in closing the excellence gaps which exists across our system.

The importance of this policy cannot be understated in ensuring that these high potential and gifted students have equity of access to quality learning experiences and resources to support and enhance their learning.

Position

The High Potential and Gifted Education Policy 2019 demonstrates the commitment of the department to providing guidance and support for schools and teachers in meeting the learning needs and optimizing the growth and achievement of high potential and gifted students from all backgrounds and across all domains (3.1 of the policy).

This invaluable work is currently being led by the HPGE P-12 team which has resulted quality professional development opportunities for principals and teaching staff across the State. This has included:

- Tier 1, (policy familiarization and planning) professional learning for leaders and teachers.
- Design of Tier 2 professional learning (core knowledge and understanding).
- Development of quality Tier 1 illustrations of practice.
- Collaborations with the profession, universities, professional associations and the broader community, Gifted NSW, NSWTF and P&C.
- Early Adopter Schools Pilot.
- Resource development including DEL/PSL package, Differentiation and adjustment tool, HPGE Evaluation and Planning Tool, Acceleration package (soon to be released), website and support materials.
- Research discussion papers.
- State-wide OC Network.
- HPGE State-wide Staffroom Network.
- Program evaluation supporting assessment of policy implementation (in support of policy statements 4.4.1 and 5.1).
- Communication and engagement.

The HPGE Advisory Group was advised at the meeting held on 20 August 2021 that HPGE Policy implementation was a three-year project and the team's contracts would end and move any HPGE expertise into Curriculum Reform Teams. The NSWPPA does not support this decision.

The NSWPPA supports:

- The continuation of the HPGE P-12 Team to support schools to effectively implement the HPGE policy across all schools in NSW taking into consideration the disruption COVID has had regarding principals and teachers implementing the policy and engaging in professional learning.
- The continuation of the HPGE Advisory Group in ongoing consultation across the State regarding HPGE will leverage implementation in all school settings.
- Recognition by the Department of Education that this policy, as a teaching and learning policy, is critical in ensuring high potential and gifted students from all backgrounds have equitable access to reach their full potential and that school leaders and teachers are fully supported by an expert team of professionals to lead schools with this work (as per 4.4.3 of the policy).
- Adequately resourcing schools and provide ongoing professional learning for school leaders and teachers (as per 4.4.3 of the policy) to ensure the HPGE policy is effectively implemented across the State. This

would include Tier 1, 2, 3 and 4 professional learning as committed to by the Department to support excellence in policy implementation.

- A moral imperative to teach HPGE students at their point of challenge to ensure their continued engagement and progression of learning. These are our future leaders, scientists, engineers, doctors, immunologists, Olympians, artists etc.
- Yearly evaluation of policy implementation to provide targeted support to schools, with a formal review of its effectiveness conducted every 3 years (as per 5.1 of the policy).

The Department of Education recognizes the placement of students into Opportunity Classes and Selective High School settings as one of the strategies to cater for the needs of students in one domain of the HPGE policy (intellectual).

The NSWPPA supports:

- Targeted professional learning for Opportunity Class teachers (to support 1.4.7, 1.6.2 and 3.2.2 of the policy).
- A specific skill set for teachers who teach Opportunity Classes commencing at initial teacher training (to support 1.4.7, 1.6.2 and 3.2.2 of the policy).
- Recognition of the complexity of Opportunity Classes in RAM as per Support Classes.
- Retention of the Gifted and Talented staffing code amended to high potential and gifted.
- Networks of practice led by the Department of Education for Opportunity Class teachers.
- Equity funding and resourcing for Opportunity Classes under RAM.

Our students deserve to be taught at their point of challenge in mainstream and Opportunity Classes by expert teachers in differentiating the curriculum.

The learning of these students must be honored.

References:

High Potential and Gifted Education Policy, Department of Education (2019)

Revisiting gifted education, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2019)

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Date Ratified: 19 November 2021