Hornsby Girls’ High School

Gifted and Talented Policy

Teaching and Learning Team 2012
Hornsby Girls’ High School Gifted and Talented Policy

The HGHS GATS Policy

HGHS is a fully selective high school for girls. Our Gifted and Talented Policy promotes Gifted Education as a school wide response to ensuring our girls receive the best possible education experience that balances their academic, cultural, leadership, sporting and affective learning needs. The HGHS GATS policy covers identification, differentiation and acceleration, catering for gifted students in programs and through differentiation of various curriculums to enhance knowledge, creativity and innovation. The School GATS Policy and teaching and learning programs are regularly evaluated.

Identification

The HGHS identification process uses multiple criteria and is inclusive and culturally fair, links to differentiation, is dynamic and continuous, and includes the full range of stakeholders.

Organisation

There are a variety of pathways in every stage that all students may access. Higher order thinking, compact curriculum and higher pathways are used within HGHS.

Acceleration

Subject or year acceleration is an option if needed. Students are identified appropriately and monitored. Teachers are prepared to accelerate students to meet their needs.

Curriculum

All units of work in all faculties are differentiated to meet the needs of students of varying abilities. Assessments for learning are used. Learning environment, content, strategies and products are modified. Assessment and reporting reflect the differentiated curricula.

Staff Professional Development and Support

There is ongoing training and support for staff and they can access professional development. Staff members meet regularly to reflect on and evaluate programs and procedures.
Parents, Caregivers and School Community

Parents understand and are well-informed about the needs of gifted students, the school’s policy, and the school’s programs which cater for these needs. Channels of communication are open in the school community.

Hornsby Girls’ High School: Gifted and Talented Identification Plan

The HGHS Gifted and Talented Identification Plan is a school wide response to improve the identification of gifted and talented students. The plan has been devised to ensure the implementation of the Department of Education and Community’s (DEC) Gifted and Talented Policy for the Identification of Gifted and Talented Students. Our school identification plan allows students, peers, parents and teachers to nominate students based on the characteristics of gifted and talented students. The school also incorporates a differentiated approach to curriculum.

Differentiated curriculum allows gifted and talented students to excel as teachers have modified content, the process of learning and the products of learning to ensure that all students can better demonstrate their differing abilities, knowledge and skills. Differentiation can be seen as ‘a process teachers use to enhance learning to improve the match between the learner’s unique characteristics and various curriculum components’ (Gubbins, Westberg, Reis et al, 2002, p. 49). Curriculum is differentiated to match the range of needs and interests and learning preferences (Jackson and Davies 2000). By employing differentiation our teachers are able to identify gifted students who may not have reached their full potential. This practice is in line with the model of Gifted and Talented Education that is used by the DEC.

This model promotes Gagne’s Differentiated Model of Gifted and Talented which emphasises that gifted students can become talented students under the right conditions. In other words it promotes the view that a student’s gifts (ie. potential) can only be transformed into talents (performance) through four factors. These are: process development (teaching and learning), interpersonal (including motivation and self-management) and environmental (school and home) catalysts and chance.
Methods used by the school to identify specific gifts and talents in students include: teacher observation, parent nomination, peer nomination, self-nomination (see the website listed below for these checklist sheets), creativity assessments, interviews, interpreters for ESL students, Selective Schools Year 7 school entry tests and semester reports.

Using Bloom’s taxonomy of cognition as a visual representation of thinking skills that are used in the process of learning, gifted and talented students thinking can be understood as a sequence of progressive contextualisation (developing a full range of understanding) of the material being studied with the emphasis on higher order thinking skills (creating, evaluating and analysing).

Hornsby Girls’ High School Differentiation Plan

The HGHS differentiation plan is a school wide response to the different learning needs of our students. The plan has been devised to incorporate the relevant research and the best ideas from each faculty. This plan allows the whole school to benefit from teaching strategies that have been developed through teacher interaction and collaboration across the faculties. Differentiation can be seen as ‘a process teachers use to enhance learning to improve the match between the learner’s unique characteristics and various curriculum components’ (Gubbins, Westberg, Reis et al, 2002, p. 49). Curriculum is differentiated to match the range of needs and interests and learning preferences (Jackson and Davies 2000).
The model of differentiation by Maker (1982) is a significant framework to modify the curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students including gifted and talented students. It focuses on modifying curriculum content, processes and products.


According to Tomlinson (1999) there are three key reasons for differentiating – ‘access to learning’, ‘motivation to learn’ and ‘efficiency of learning’. Differentiation therefore improves the effectiveness of learning for all students including gifted and talented students.

Using Blooms taxonomy of cognition as a visual representation of thinking skills that are used in the process of learning, differentiation can be understood as a sequence of progressive contextualisation (developing a full range of understanding) of the material being studied with the emphasis on higher order thinking skills (creating, evaluating and analysing).

**Hornsby Girls’ High School Acceleration Plan**

The HGHS Acceleration Plan is part of the implementation of the Giftedness and Talented Policy of the Department of Education and Communities. It combines with the school's Identification of Gifted and Talented Students and Curriculum Differentiation Plan to ensure that we provide the best possible outcomes for our students. Acceleration of gifted and talented students means that in certain subjects (i.e. HSC IPT and HSC Geography) identified students can complete studies in higher year groups. Under our acceleration plan students can complete elements of their HSC before their year group in line with the NSW Board of Studies requirements (BOS 2000).

By accelerating students we will be providing them with the appropriate academic and social setting for their particular needs. This will allow high performing students to be placed in the appropriate course level. When accelerated these students will have, ‘*higher levels of motivation less pressure for peer acceptance and closer social relationships than they did prior to acceleration*’ (Gross 1992). According to the department acceleration is a placement procedure not an educational program. Use the link below for further information on Acceleration and direct access to the DEC website:
