IGNITE! A Differentiated Curriculum Program for Gifted Students

- Trishelle Grieves

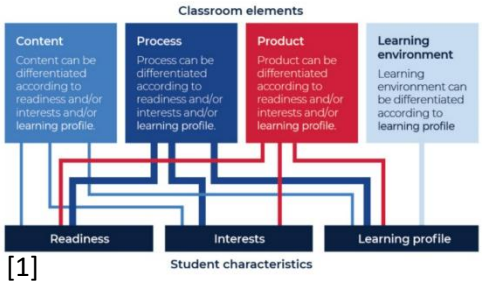
The core intention of differentiated educational opportunities is to advance the performance of all students, including learners who are highly able and have exceptional learning profiles. It is essential for educators to respond in their instruction to the variability among learners within the classroom setting, developing relevant differentiation of learning that promotes engagement and growth.

Purpose of Gifted Programs

Defining two distinct yet interconnected goals, the 2019 Alice Springs Declaration supports educators in promoting excellence and equity whilst developing confident, creative life-long learners who are informed members of the community (CAGEC, 2019). In relating these goals to our gifted population in schools, excellence requires all gifted students to have access to a rigorous, relevant and engaging curriculum that encourages high expectations and performance. Contemporary research indicates that content and teaching practices should align the challenge, complexity, depth and pace of learning with the erudition of our top 10% of students (Gagné, 2017). Applying Françoys Gagné's estimation of 10% and Department of Education and Training's 2018 estimation of 3.8 million Australians of school age, there were estimated to be approximately 380,000 gifted children in schools across Australia (AAEGT, 2018) that are entitled to these considerations.

What is IGNITE?

The IGNITE program is a unique, gifted and talented program implemented in a Prep – Year 6 Primary School setting that differentiates a challenging core curriculum and offers flexible choice offerings that are designed to engage and challenge our passionate, advanced learners. It is structured as differentiated, in-class support, specifically targeted small-group instruction and deliberate individualised curriculum extension, enrichment and acceleration experiences. In alignment with Gagné's DMGT, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2023) acknowledges that numerous models of curriculum adjustment for gifted and talented students are accessible. When contemplating potential models, it is important to consider appropriateness to the situation, comprehensiveness, flexibility and adaptability, practicality and validity (Maker and Schiever, 2005). Using evidence-based curriculum differentiation models, these carefully planned, coordinated learning experiences take into consideration content, process, product and learning environment to compliment, enrich and extend beyond what is being taught in the classroom. Purposeful consultation and collaboration with students (negotiated learning), parents, education consultants, support teachers: inclusive education, guidance counsellors and private practitioners is critical. "Learning is a partnership with parents, carers and others in the community, all of whom have a role to play in nurturing the love of learning needed for success at school and in life." (CAGEC, 2019). Ultimately, IGNITE allows students to challenge themselves by combining the curricular strategies of enrichment, extension and acceleration and integrates instructional strategies that engage gifted learners at appropriate levels of challenge. It allows students to *Ignite their spark!* and *Fuel their fire!* in a supportive environment.



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Program Effectiveness

Evaluating effectiveness benefits processes and practice and assists educators to understand how well programs are performing to achieve desired outcomes. The provision of data and essential feedback on the successes and challenges informs decision making so that ongoing adjustments and program improvements can be implemented. Notably, it is essential to monitor the efficacy of any necessary revisions. To evaluate the effectiveness of the IGNITE program, students, staff and parents are regularly consulted. Program participants have ongoing opportunities during learning experiences to reflect and provide feedback on what they are learning. Ultimately, ongoing evaluation of IGNITE ensures program expectations are being met and student learning outcomes supported.

Educational consultant, Anita Archer, aptly states, "Success breeds success. Success breeds motivation." By providing the right learning opportunities and experiences, IGNITE gives gifted students the strategies for success, they relish in their success and strive towards achieving continued success. This leads to exceptional student achievement and performance.

References

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Image Reference

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