Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM)

Apache Junction Unified School District is excited to implement the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model for the 2010-2011 school year in our elementary schools. At the heart of the SCGM are three essential strategies:

- Identifying and placing all students in mixed ability classes that have a slightly narrowed range of student abilities
- Ensuring that all students will experience differentiation opportunities
- Providing appropriate professional development for staff

Each grade level will have three cluster groups: Gifted Education, ELL (English Language Learners), and Special Education (SPED). While some grade levels may not have students that qualify in these areas, the teachers will be trained to differentiate instruction to accommodate each specific area.

The teachers will use differentiation methods that vary the content, pace, process, and learning environment that will benefit all students. Ongoing assessments and identification of students’ strengths, abilities, and performance allows teachers to differentiate flexibly and effectively and ensures that all students make continuous progress.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM)

What does it mean to place students in cluster groups?
Each grade level will have three cluster groups: Gifted Education, ELL (English Language Learners), and Special Education (SPED). With the SCGM, all students are grouped into clusters based on their abilities and achievement potential. The clusters are then placed in classrooms with carefully structured compositions to ensure a balance of abilities throughout each grade level and learning range within each classroom that is narrower than a typical classroom. This system provides opportunities for teachers to more readily respond to the needs of ALL of their students.

Are the cluster groups “visible” in the classroom?
Each group is rarely distinguishable from other groups of students in the classroom. All students will move in and out of groups according to interest, ability, and pace regarding different topics.

Won’t the creation of a gifted-cluster group rob the other classes of academic leadership?
All classes will have a group of gifted students OR a group of high-achieving students, so every class will have academic leaders. Many times, this allows high-achieving students new opportunities to become academic leaders.
**How will students with Individualized Education Plans/SPED be supported?**

Students will be given service time from the Special Education staff according to their IEP goals. Student accommodations/modifications will be implemented within the core curriculum with the collaboration of the Special Education teacher. The classroom teacher and the Special Education teacher will work together to incorporate differentiated instructional strategies for student success.

**How will clustering benefit my Gifted/Talent Pool student?**

Grouping gifted children in a regular classroom can provide academic, social, and emotional advantages to the students. Gifted students who are clustered demonstrate high achievement because they experience more consistent challenge in their learning activities. The system provides opportunities for teachers to more readily respond to the needs of all their students, to challenge gifted students clustered together in mixed-ability classes, and to engage in practices that lead to improved academic achievement for all students. The school is now able to provide a full-time program for gifted students since their learning needs are being met every day.

**How will English language learners (ELL) be supported in cluster classrooms?**

Students who are learning English will participate in the mainstream classroom with accommodations appropriate to their English language level. Students will have an Individualized Language Learner Plan (ILLP) containing specific language goals that the teacher will focus on during daily instruction. Teachers will differentiate the core curriculum to meet the needs of all students, and the language needs of ELL students. Support staff and training will help the teacher utilize strategies to promote English language acquisition for students within the mainstream classroom.