



Kagan Structures in the 'Gifted Clustered Classroom'

STEFANIE MCKOY

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Grouping gifted students, or 'gifted clustering', in the regular education classroom setting is a highly beneficial practice and greatly encouraged by gifted education advocates. Gifted clustering is the intentional placement of a group of identified gifted and talented students in the same regular education classroom. Kagan Structures have a powerful place in these classrooms as gifted students are able to challenge each other while bringing new perspective to the classroom. Whether it is a class structure or partner structure, all participants are able to benefit from the intentional grouping of gifted students in the regular classroom.

I have worked with gifted clusters in the regular classroom for over six years. At any time, I had 4-6 gifted students in my classroom and used Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures hourly. Now, as a gifted educator, I want to continue to support classroom teachers in successfully utilising Kagan Structures with gifted students.

Tips for Grouping Gifted Students during Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures

- 1. Allow gifted students to work together:** One of the main benefits of gifted clustering is providing students with like-minded peers. By placing them together in cooperative groups, they are able to challenge each other and build on each other's ideas. Even with a group of 4 gifted students, there will be varying strengths and weaknesses.



2. **Do not use gifted students exclusively as peer tutors:** One of the major complaints of gifted students is that they are always asked to tutor or help their peers. Gifted students should be placed with other gifted students in order to grow their own thinking.
3. **Use clear roles and expectations:** Kagan Cooperative Structures were developed to have equal participation and this is key when a gifted student is engaged in working with others. When utilising cooperative learning structures, make sure that all students have a clear understanding of their roles during the activity to help prevent Hogs and Logs in cooperative work.
4. **Help the gifted student learn to explain:** It can be hard for the gifted student to adequately express their thinking to others. Be sure to model and scaffold how to explain their thinking to other students.
5. **Understand the uniqueness of giftedness:** Gifted students are unique thinkers and may approach problems differently. In addition, gifted students may be extremely sensitive or active. By being aware of a gifted student's uniqueness, the classroom teacher can intentionally group the student with peers to help him or her in all areas.
6. **Giftedness in one area might be a weakness in another:** Gifted students may be strong in one academic area and not others. When placing gifted students into cooperative learning groups, be mindful of the student's academic strengths and weaknesses.
7. **Sometimes working alone is okay:** It is okay to allow gifted students to work alone, but just not all of the time. There may be times when cooperative learning is just too much to handle for the gifted student. Try to set a time limit or turn limit for the gifted student to participate in the cooperative learning.
8. **Mix it up:** Don't keep gifted students exclusively in their gifted cluster. They will learn and grow more if they are given the opportunity to interact with all classmates. Use Kagan Structures designed to create interactions with students outside their base teams. Form occasional random teams for certain activities. Spread gifted students across heterogeneous teams frequently. Working in a variety of settings with a diversity of students will help gifted students grow academically and socially.

Stefanie McKoy has been an educator for over 12 years and has worked with gifted clusters for 6 years. She is currently a gifted educator with the Ozark School District in Ozark, MO. She is also an author for Kagan Publishing.