

## Priorities for In-School Provisions

After studying the summary in Table 7.6, you may find this next section repetitive. But if you dislike tables and charts, perhaps the following recommendations will be helpful, since they list guidelines concerning what to ask the school to provide in order to meet the educational needs of your child. These guidelines are listed in a general order of importance. Your own child's needs, however, may dictate a different order for your requests.

1. **Grouping is important.** Teachers and parents must find ways to allow gifted or talented students to spend the majority of their learning time in the academic core areas with others of like abilities and interests. Although self-contained grouping, such as a special school for the gifted or a full-time gifted program, may not be the answer or even a possibility, you should be able to expect a third to a half year's additional achievement per year as a minimum standard of what you could expect bright children to accomplish no matter what their management or grouping arrangement. In other words, for each year in school, gifted student should be given the chance to accomplish 15-18 months' work in academic core areas as compared with the regular curriculum. It is crucial to carefully monitor this rate of academic progress through out-of-level achievement tests.
2. **Cluster grouping as an option.** Cluster grouping and regrouped classes for all academic core areas may be suitable substitutes for full-time placement in a gifted program or school. Care must be taken, however, concerning what type of cluster is established and to ensure that placement in advance regrouped classes is due to the student's actual performance, not just scheduling because a class is available at an open slot in the course schedule.
3. **Curriculum matters.** No matter what the grouping arrangement chosen for the academic core areas, attention must be focused on what will be taught and to what level of depth. Ultimately, the curriculum is probably more important than how the children are grouped. (The next chapter will address this issue in depth.)
4. **Pull-out programs are not enough.** Pull-out programs should be used with care. It is the focus of the pull-out program that is critical. The greatest achievement gains will be found for pull-out programs that extend the general classroom curriculum in *specific* academic areas. Likewise, the pullout can probably never be considered sufficient differentiation for gifted or talented children. Their needs are *every day* in almost *every academic area*. A pull-out experience once or twice a week will not, by itself, suffice.

5. **Within-class grouping is not sufficient.** Within-class grouping, like-ability cooperative learning, and like-ability peer tutoring dyads should be used when no other forms of grouping are possible in a school setting. They can be beneficial for gifted children if the curriculum is appropriately differentiated, but too often, teachers are not trained, nor do they have the time to do this well on a daily basis. Likewise, the group in which the gifted or talented child or children find themselves may have a wide range of ability. Hence, the child may not be stretched as fully as needed in such an arrangement.
6. **Enrichment is usually inadequate.** Do not expect that enrichment will take place with any regularity in a school that expects all teachers to enrich in their respective classrooms. Any enrichment provided will be infrequent and more likely “busy work,” rather than differentiated learning tasks and experiences.
7. **Dyads should be used sparingly.** Teachers should use mixed-ability dyads and grouping for open-ended or problem-based tasks *only*, not for convergent, repetitive, or mastery learning tasks.
8. **Mixed-ability cooperative learning is appropriate only in certain situations.** Teachers should use mixed-ability cooperative learning only for occasional socialization or for open-ended or problem-based tasks. It is not appropriate for convergent, repetitive, or mastery learning tasks.
9. **Be cautious in accepting whole-class instruction.** Whole class instruction should be used rarely, if at all, with gifted or talented children. The pacing and instruction will not be suitable for effective retention of what is learned. If whole-class instruction were offered as the mode of delivery for an out-of-level (i.e., cross-graded) class, it might be used successfully with gifted or talented children.