



Gonski Institute Research Brief Series
No. 2024.1

Gifted students in rural schools

Contributed by the UNSW Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC)

The issue

We don't know enough about the experiences of gifted students in rural schools. We suspect they might have different experiences from gifted students in urban schools because in rural areas there is a greater prevalence of small schools, higher rates of teacher and principal turnover, a lower average level of teachers' experience, and a greater likelihood of teachers teaching out-of-field.

While small schools and classes can facilitate more individualised instruction, the peer group for social interaction may be smaller. Supports for gifted students may also be less accessible in rural schools.

What we did

To identify the current state of knowledge about rural gifted education, Jae Jung, Geraldine Townend, Peta Hay, and Susen Smith from GERRIC did a systematic review of peer-reviewed journal articles that reported the results of

peer-reviewed journal articles that reported the results of empirical studies of gifted students in rural schools. 103 studies from 14 countries were included in the GERRIC team's review, all of which were studies published in the English language from January 2000 to October 2020.

Key findings



Culturally diverse and economically disadvantaged rural students are under-identified as gifted.



Gifted education provisions are less commonly available in rural schools.



Some rural teachers are less knowledgeable about gifted education, and have reservations about provisions for these students such as ability grouping and acceleration.



Provisions for gifted students in rural schools tend to be slow-paced, repetitive, insufficiently challenging, and irrelevant to students' experiences.



High levels of creativity, problem solving abilities and artistic talent were found among gifted students in some rural schools.



Gifted students in rural schools tend to have more positive forms of perfectionism than their urban peers (e.g., focusing on doing one's best).



The socio-emotional wellbeing of rural gifted students may be higher than the socio-emotional wellbeing of urban gifted students.

Much less research in gifted education has focused on rural contexts than on urban contexts, and there is a need for more large-scale studies using rigorous research designs. Although inequities in the provision of supports for rural gifted students compared to their urban counterparts may exist, the assumption should not be made that the replication of practices (such as ability grouping and acceleration) that are more readily available in urban settings, in rural settings, is wise. The field of gifted education could usefully focus on how to ensure that gifted students in every context can be appropriately challenged without causing anxiety and distress.

Want more information?

This research brief is based on *The State of Knowledge in Rural Gifted Education: A Systematic Literature Review*. This journal article can be accessed from the [Journal of Advanced Academics website](#).

Jung, J. Y., Townend, G., Hay, P. K., & Smith, S. R. (2022).

The state of knowledge in rural gifted education: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 33(3), 315-363.

About the researchers

[Dr Jae Jung](#) is a Professor in the UNSW School of Education and the Director of GERRIC. Much of his research is related to gifted adolescents, with a particular focus on their career-related decisions.



[Dr Geraldine Townend](#) is a published academic in gifted education with expertise in twice-exceptionality: gifted students who also have special needs. She is a lecturer and researcher at UNSW with GERRIC.



[Dr Peta K. Hay](#) is an English teacher at Canley Vale High School in Sydney. She was formerly a gifted education lecturer at UNSW, and presenter of the Mini-Certificate of Gifted Education.



[Dr Susen R. Smith](#) is an internationally recognised gifted education academic. She is a GERRIC Senior Research Fellow, and Honorary Senior Lecturer in Gifted and Special Education in the UNSW School of Education.



Acknowledgements

This research was undertaken with the support of philanthropic funding to GERRIC.

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