



Understanding selective education in NSW

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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Item

An overview of selective education

- What do the terms high potential and gifted describe?
- What are selective education schools?

Should my child apply?

The Review into Selective Education Access

Action in response to the review into Selective Education Access

- The equity placement model
- Some of the additional measures delivered or in development

Next steps

- Tips if you are considering schools

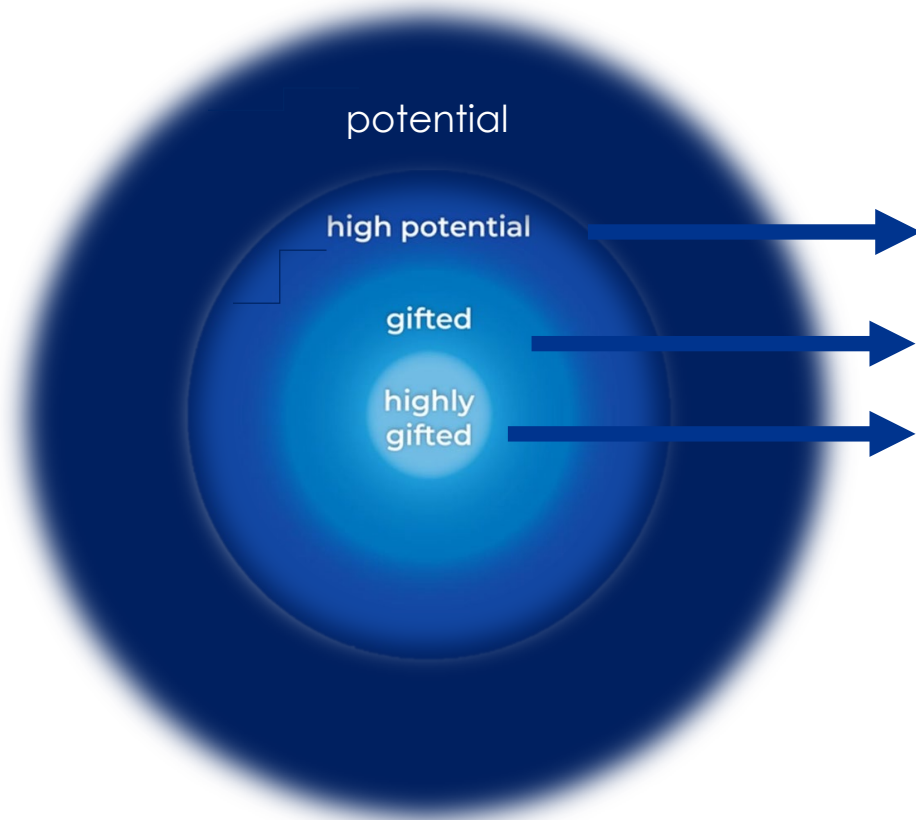
An overview of selective education



What do the terms high potential and gifted describe?

ALL students have potential to learn

High potential and gifted students typically develop talent and achieve mastery with **greater ease** and **speed** than their same age peers.



High potential students are those whose potential **exceeds** that of students of the same age in one or more domains

Gifted students are those whose potential **significantly exceeds** that of students of the same age in one or more domains

Highly gifted students are those whose potential **vastly exceeds** that of students of the same age in one or more domains:

What do the terms high potential and gifted describe?

Leading expert, Professor François Gagné, outlines that students may show potential in one or more areas including:

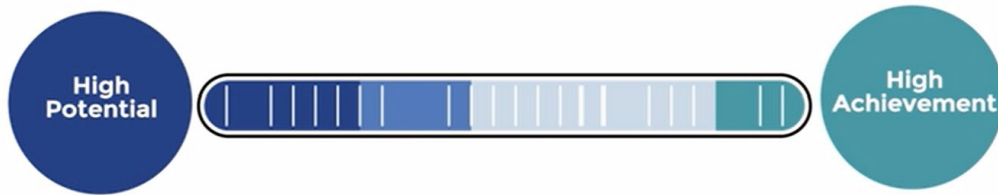
- intellectual,
- creative,
- social-emotional, and
- physical.



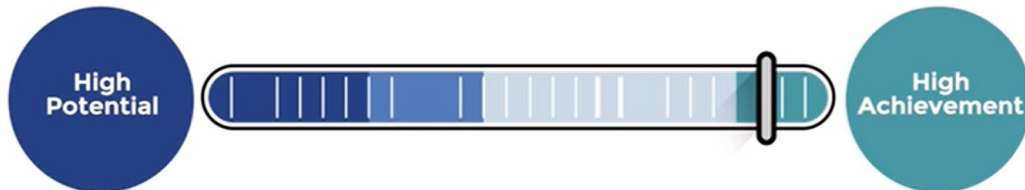
More information can be found in our online [video](#).

Selective education support high potential to become high achievement

Gagné has demonstrated that potential exists along a continuum.



Gagné asserts that, given the right conditions, high potential can lead to high performance and achievement.



More information can be found in our online [video](#).



What are selective education schools?

Selective education schools help students learn by:

- **grouping them** with students of similar ability so that they work collaboratively with like-minded students.
- using specialised evidence-based methods to support students;
 - **acceleration-** to move through curricula at a faster pace,
 - **enrichment-** to explore concepts in greater depth, and
 - **extension-** to engage with content of greater and increasing complexity.
- providing learning activities that are often more **open ended** and use more of the higher order thinking skills of **analysis, synthesis and evaluation.**

Selective schools offer equity of access: they enrol students based on their **ability**, not their background.



What are selective education schools?

Research demonstrates that **grouping high potential and gifted students together:**

- **provides academic benefits.**
- **is good for students' social and emotional wellbeing.**

Most students in selective education schools report higher levels of satisfaction from learning with, and being friends with, like-minded students. They report that they:

- **often feel less isolated** and form meaningful social relationships, and
- **become more resilient** in environments where other students are also academic high performers.

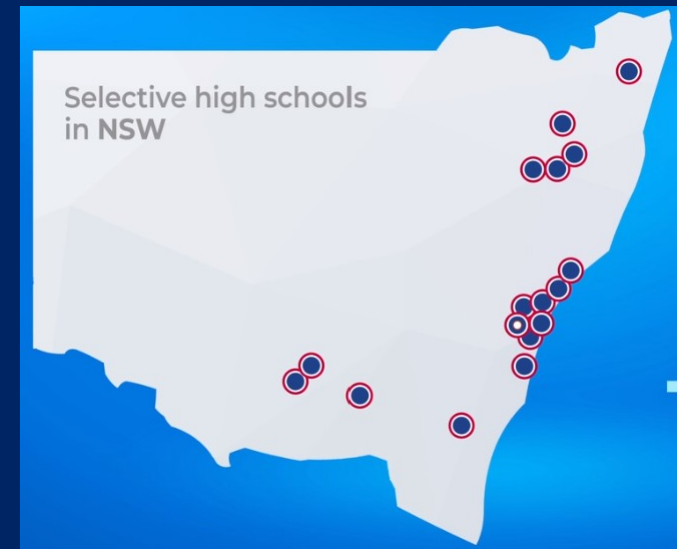


What are selective education schools?

Selective High Schools

Selective high schools are government schools for high potential and gifted students. There are:

- o 17 fully selective high schools - where all students attending the school are high potential or gifted,

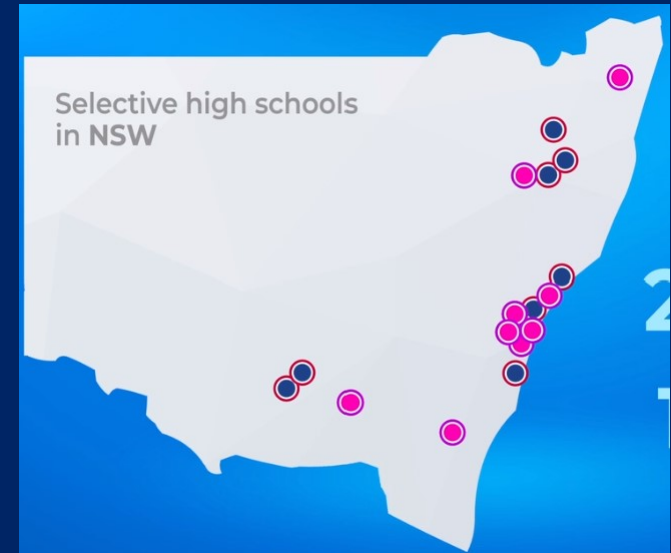


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- o 26 partially selective high schools - where a school has a specialist class or classes for high potential and gifted students within a regular comprehensive high school,

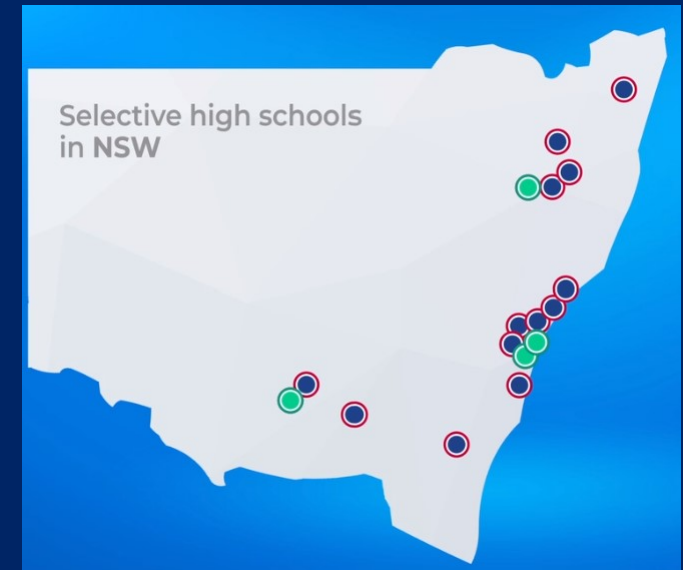


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- 4 agricultural selective high schools, some with boarding facilities for students from regional, rural and remote areas.

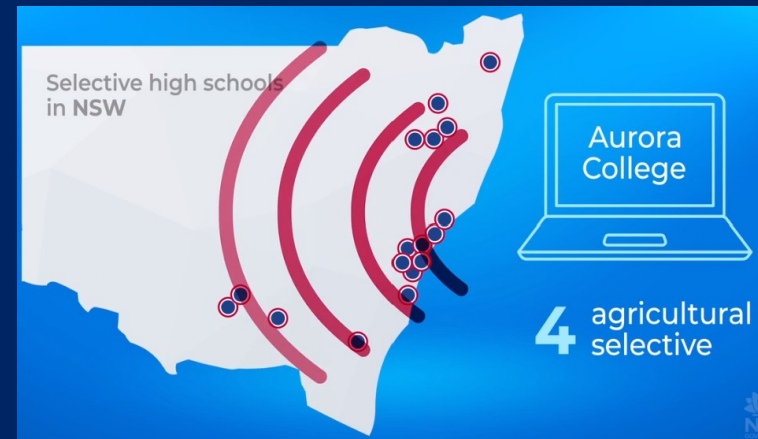


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- Aurora College, a virtual selective high school.



Aurora, our virtual selective school

Aurora College is a virtual selective high school for high potential and gifted students who live in regional, rural or remote NSW and don't have access to selective education in their local area.

Students successfully placed at Aurora College attend their local government primary school for some subjects and join their Aurora class for English, science and mathematics lessons using an online conferencing system.

Students from non-government schools who are successfully placed will need to enrol in a local government primary school to be a part of the Aurora program.



Aurora College uses contemporary technologies to provide academically gifted and high potential students in rural and remote areas the opportunity to participate in selective education.

Should my child apply?

Common characteristics of high potential and gifted students

The characteristics listed below may be found in many learners but in high potential and gifted learners they are strongly evident and often appear in clusters.

High potential and gifted learners may:

- have a high academic performance (especially in areas they enjoy)
- enjoy learning
- have intense curiosity
- display a good memory
- ask complex questions
- enjoy learning new and often complex ideas or skills
- require fewer repetitions when learning new things
- be creative
- become intensely focused in their area of interest or passion

If your child demonstrates any of these characteristics, they may be a good candidate for selective education.

These characteristics should be used as only one source of evidence to assess and identify students.

The types of students who should apply

Keep in mind that:

- o most students who are successful in selective environments tend to be **highly motivated**.
- o most, but not all, gifted and high potential students are **high achievers** at school.
- o gifted and high potential students **may be underachieving** and/or have their ability masked – especially if they come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, low socio-educational groups, are Aboriginal, and/or have disability.
- o **selective education settings are not the only option for high potential and gifted students.** Families should think about whether their child will thrive in a selective education environment and if so, which selective education school or class is best for them.

High potential or gifted learners may not be easily identifiable if they have been impacted by disability or disadvantage.

The Review of Selective Education Access



The Review into Selective Education Access

There is substantial academic research that shows us that high potential and gifted students are found across diverse;

- o family,
- o socio-economic,
- o language,
- o cultural backgrounds,
- o geographic locations
- o and with disability.

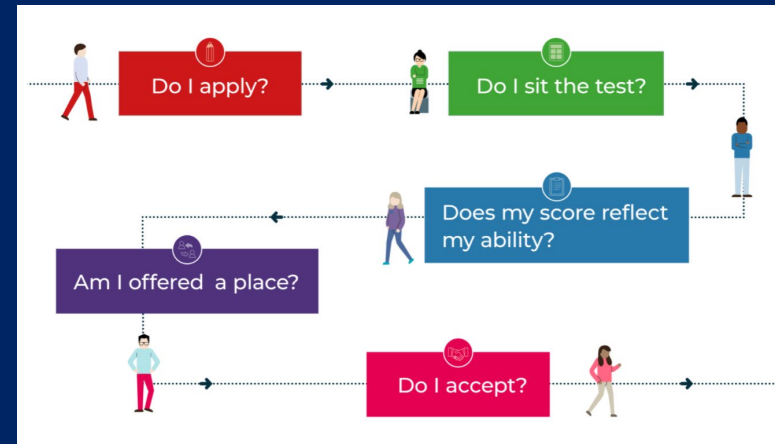


High potential or gifted learners exist across all sectors of our communities.

The Review of Selective Education Access

It found that NSW selective schools :

- **are a valued choice** for high potential and gifted students and their families,
- **deliver excellence in academic achievement** and
- **contribute to high levels of wellbeing** for high potential and gifted students.
- **have fewer high potential and gifted students from particular groups**, meaning those groups are currently under-represented in our selective education system. They are:
 - students from low socio-educational advantage backgrounds,
 - Aboriginal students,
 - students from rural and remote locations and/or
 - students with disability.



View online [here](#)

or Google- “Review of Selective Education Access”

The Review of Selective Education Access

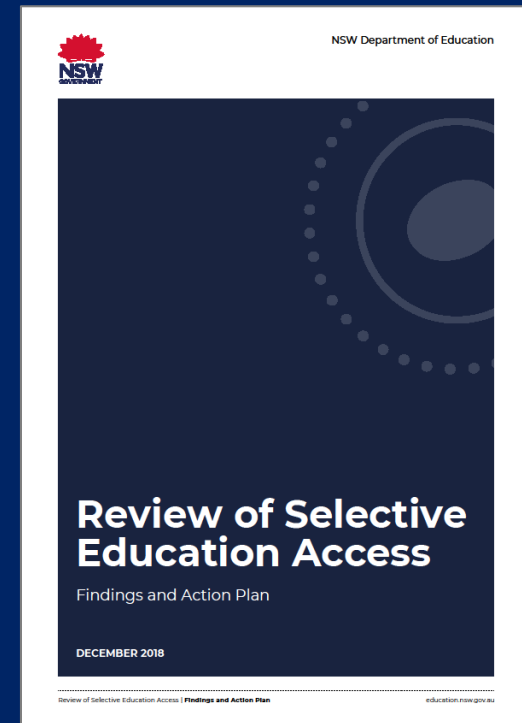
The Department is committed to having:

- a **fair** selective education system.
- **equitable representation** in our selective education schools of high potential and gifted students from all sectors of our communities.

Our selective education system needs modernisation if it is to continue being fit for purpose in the coming decades.

As a result of the Review an action plan was designed, to;

- ensure that entry to selective schools is based on ability, not background,
- optimise the selection process to accurately identify students' ability,
- address the gaps in today's complex selection system.



View online [here](#)

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The Review of Selective Education Access

ACTION 1: *Encourage more gifted students from under-represented groups to apply*

ACTION 2: *Ensure appropriate provisions and adjustments for gifted students with disability*

ACTION 8: *Reduce predictability and coachability, and support schools in preparing their students to sit the selection tests*

REVIEW OF SELECTIVE EDUCATION ACCESS
ACTION PLAN

DELIVERING A MODERN, WORLD-CLASS SELECTION SYSTEM FOR NSW SELECTIVE SCHOOLS

Selective schools offer valued choice and excellent outcomes for gifted students and their families but the existing selection system is no longer fit for purpose. Designed for 12 fully selective high schools in 1991, it has stretched to accommodate 48 selective high schools and 76 primary schools with opportunity classes.

F1 F2 F6

ENSURING THAT ENTRY TO SELECTIVE SCHOOLS IS BASED ON ABILITY, NOT BACKGROUND	OPTIMISING THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS TO ACCURATELY IDENTIFY STUDENTS' ABILITY	ADDRESSING THE GAPS IN A COMPLEX SYSTEM
WHY?		
Students from disadvantaged groups face unintended barriers to entry	Shortcomings in test design and inconsistencies in school assessment practices mean that the process may not identify all the students it is intended to	As the selective education system has grown more complex over time, a number of gaps have emerged that constrain its effectiveness
ACTIONS		
<p>ACTION 1: Encourage more gifted students from under-represented groups to apply</p> <p>ACTION 2: Ensure appropriate provisions and adjustments for gifted students with disability</p> <p>ACTION 3: Make the selection process more relevant for gifted students from rural and remote areas, and the selective schools that target them</p>	<p>ACTION 4: Minimise imprecision to increase confidence in the accuracy of measurement</p> <p>ACTION 5: Align the difficulty of the tests to the ability levels of the gifted students</p> <p>ACTION 6: Update the frameworks used to guide test design and incorporate state-of-the-art assessment strategies</p>	<p>ACTION 7: Ensure mathematical and English ability are correctly weighted</p> <p>ACTION 8: Reduce predictability and coachability, and support schools in preparing their students to sit the selection tests</p> <p>ACTION 9: Partner with schools, families and communities to revise the School Assessment Score process</p> <p>ACTION 10: Close the gender gap in the selection system</p> <p>ACTION 11: Consider adjustments to the process of nominating school preference</p> <p>ACTION 12: Partner with schools, families and communities to review post-Year 7 entry to selective education</p> <p>ACTION 13: Strengthen the department's ability to link data across the NSW education system and its responsiveness to emerging trends in selective education</p>
FINDINGS		
<p>FINDING 1: Selective schools continue to offer valued choice for gifted students and their families</p> <p>FINDING 2: The existing selection process is no longer fit for purpose and needs updating for the coming decades</p> <p>FINDING 3: Students from disadvantaged groups face unintended barriers to entry in the selective education system</p>	<p>FINDING 4: Shortcomings in the assessment process mean it is not capturing all students' true ability and so may not identify all the students it is intended to</p> <p>FINDING 5: A number of gaps in the selection system constrain its effectiveness</p> <p>FINDING 6: NSW selective schools need a world-class selection process</p>	

Review of Selective Education Access | Findings and Action Plan | education.nsw.gov.au

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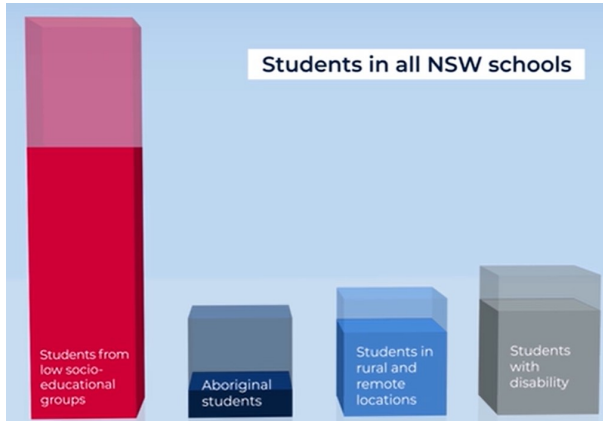
Action in response to the Review of Selective Education Access-

The equity placement model

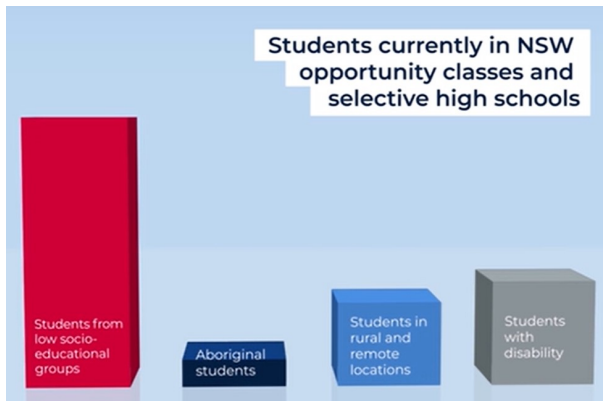


The equity placement model

We compared that with the number of students in equity groups currently in all NSW public schools.



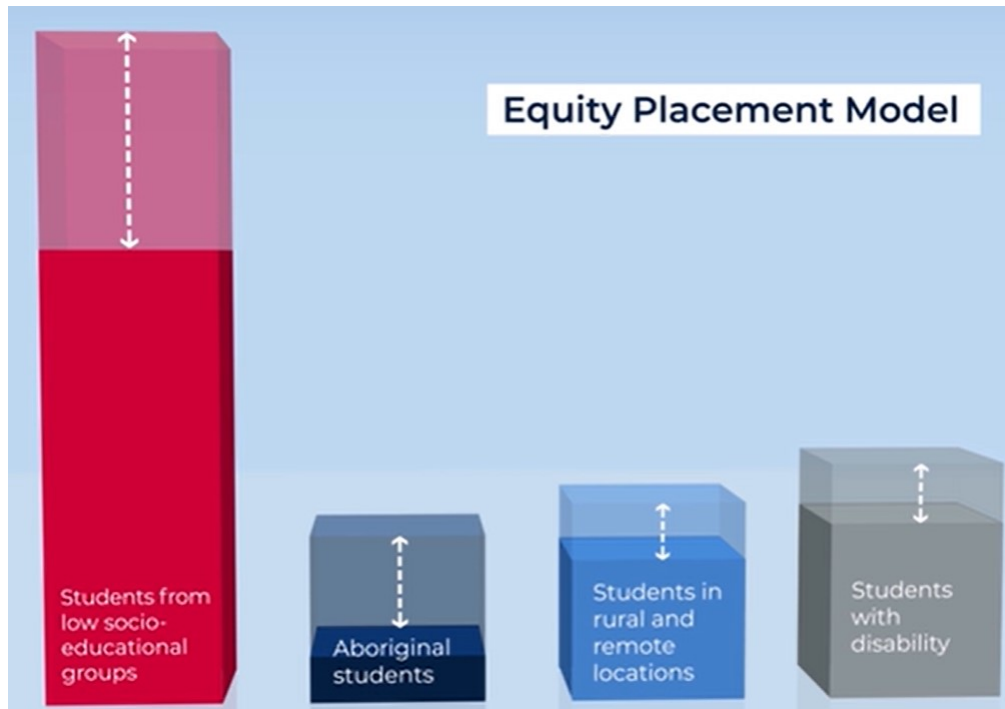
The department identified the number of students in equity groups currently in opportunity classes and selective high schools.



There is no separate application process. Students from each of the equity groups will be identified using data from the application form and other data held by the department.

The equity placement model

The Equity Placement Model aims to reduce the gap between the current numbers of equity students in opportunity classes and selective high schools and the target benchmarks.

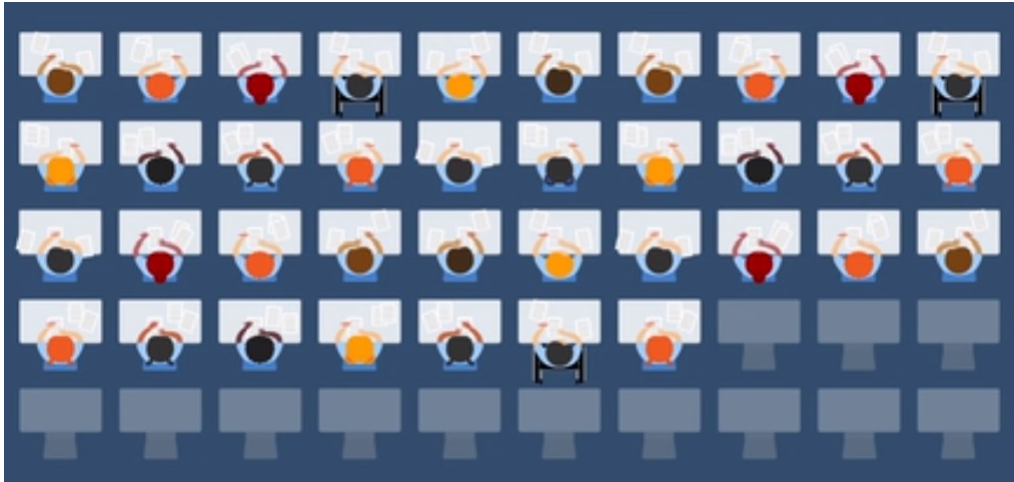


All students, including those in equity groups, are expected to take the placement test and their performance in the test matters.

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The equity placement model

How the model works

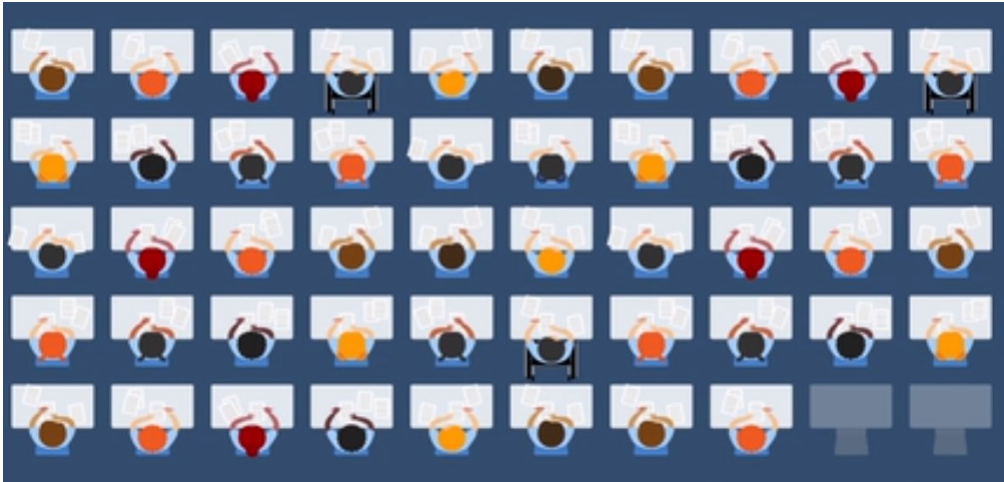


- 1) First, 75% of places to students according to their performance in the placement test. This includes students in equity groups whose performance qualifies them for one of these places.

For more information about the equity placement model go to <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/general-information/equity-placement-model>

The equity placement model

How the model works



- 2) The next 20% of places are made available to students in the equity groups who have not already been offered a place.

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The equity placement model

How the model works



Up to 5% of places are set aside for students who were unable to sit the test.

For more information about the equity placement model go to <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes/general-information/equity-placement-model>

The equity placement model

Offers made under the model

There have always been students from under-represented groups that received placement offers in the first round of offers.

This year 592 students from under-represented groups have received first round offers in the general applicants list.

The additional places offered this year under the Equity Placement Model has made progress in closing the gap in participation from under-represented groups.



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The equity placement model

How many initial offers were made under the model for 2023 entry?

For initial offers for 2023 fewer than half of the equity places held were offered:

- 369 out of 860 equity places held, or 8.7% of the 20% have been offered.
- The majority of students offered equity places have test performance equivalent to or higher than students on the reserve lists for those schools.
- The vast majority of places this year will be offered to general applicants (91.3% of 4,253).

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Action in response to the Review of Selective Education Access-

Other changes



The Review of Selective Education Access

ACTION 1: Encourage more gifted students from under-represented groups to apply

An increase in applications from students from under-represented groups
An increase in the success of students from under-represented groups gaining a place in selective education

ACTION 2: Ensure appropriate provisions and adjustments for gifted students with disability

Students with disability are able to access the test, and be successful at gaining a place, at comparable rates to students without a disability

ACTION 8: Reduce predictability and coachability, and support schools in preparing their students to sit the selection tests

Students from under-represented groups and their schools are able to access quality resources to assist them to prepare for the test

REVIEW OF SELECTIVE EDUCATION ACCESS
ACTION PLAN

DELIVERING A MODERN, WORLD-CLASS SELECTION SYSTEM FOR NSW SELECTIVE SCHOOLS

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Review of Selective Education Access | Findings and Action Plan | education.nsw.gov.au

View online [here](#)

Or Google- "Review of Selective Education Access"

The Review of Selective Education Access

The placement test

Designed to:

- measure the academic ability of students.
- detect high potential and gifted students who may benefit from placement in a Selective high school.
- **it is NOT an assessment of syllabus content** delivered in curricula at school. We avoid questions which are beyond Stage 3 students.

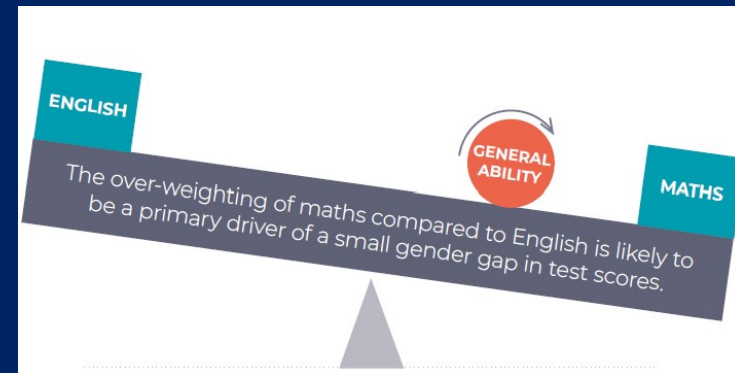
As a result of the review, we have changed the test design

By:

- changing the weighting of test items to remove item type bias.
- reducing the predictability with increased variety of test item types.
- reviewing test content to remove unintended cultural bias.

ACTION 8: *Reduce predictability and coachability, and support schools in preparing their students to sit the selection tests*

There is a [video guide](#) on our website.



Next steps



Next steps

When choosing schools, consider...

o Curriculum

All NSW public schools offer a range of subjects which follow the NSW curriculum.

Some selective high schools may offer elective subjects that others do not.

Some may also offer particular subjects using accelerated learning techniques.

Partially selective high schools are more likely to offer vocational education subjects.

Additionally, some selective high schools are agricultural schools that require all students to take agriculture as a subject up until Year 10.



Next steps

- **The location of schools**

There are many benefits to choosing a school that is located close to your home. Research tells us that excessive travel impacts on academic performance and student wellbeing. Spending time with school friends on the weekend can be especially difficult when you live far away.

- **Extracurricular activities**

Extracurricular activities are an important part of school life. Selective schools typically offer a wide range of sporting, musical and creative activities. Therefore, it's important to find out what's available in each school beyond the standard curriculum.

- **Ask around**

Schools play an important role in each community and for that reason, each NSW public school has something unique to offer. Take [this](#) into account when considering a selective school.



Next steps

- **Visit the schools**

This is the best way to learn about a school. It provides you with an opportunity to meet staff and see the schools' facilities and students. You can ask about the ways the school support students to move to a new school.

If your child has disability or medical conditions that require specific supports you can discuss this with staff at the school and learn about the ways the school can support you and your child.

Most schools hold one or more open days or offer school tours. You should check the school's website to find out when these are held.



Next steps

- **Look online**

Consulting a school's website and social media accounts can help you learn more about the staff and students at a school, as well as the subjects and the extracurricular activities a school offers. Many schools upload newsletters and have content about recent school activities, student achievements, community involvement and upcoming events. This can provide helpful insights into what makes each school a unique and important part of their community.

- **Talk with your child**

Together, consider your child's interests and abilities, their academic and social-emotional needs, as well as any specialised support they may require.

You should only choose schools for placement that your child wants to attend.



The NSW selective education website

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/selective-high-schools-and-opportunity-classes>

Questions

