

# The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM)

- Presented by Susan Winebrenner, MS
- Virginia Region VII Gifted Conference
- June 21, 2011



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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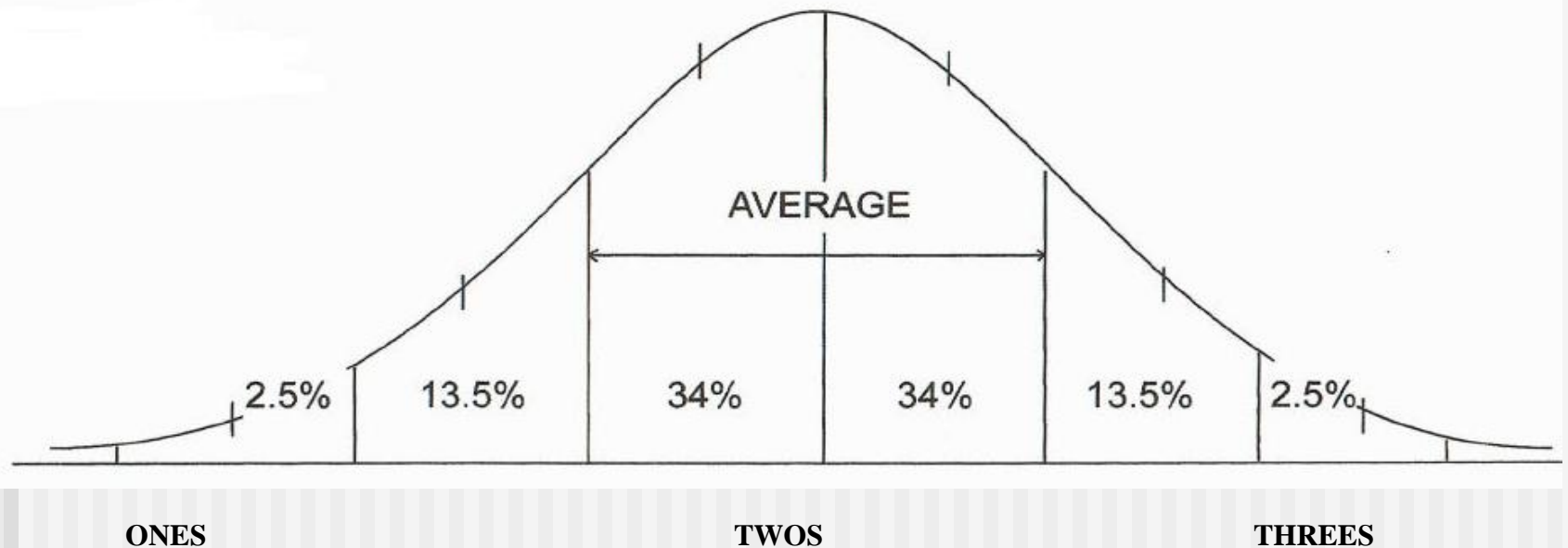
- Gifted students learn at levels much higher than those used for age level peers
- Gifted students may not be advanced learners in all subject areas
- No parent of a gifted student sends their child to school to “teach”.
- Gifted students are entitled to full time attention to their learning needs, as are all other students

# Changes in Gifted Education

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- To keep gifted students enrolled in your school, they need to consistently move forward in their learning progress.
- The trend has been to make this happen in the regular classroom.
- Gifted Education is becoming part of the regular school structure, rather than an “add-on”.

- Pace
- Method/Learning Style
- Amount
- Peer Interaction
- Teacher Interaction
- Product Type
- Choice/Menus
- Project Work
- Creativity
- Link to interests
- Movement



# What gifted students need

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- Up-front credit for grade level standards already mastered
- Opportunities to move faster through material that is new to them
- Independent study opportunities
- Consistent opportunities to struggle to learn; reduced pressure on being easily perfect

# Differentiation

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- The teacher adjusts content, process, and product in response to students' readiness, learning style strengths, learning levels, and appropriate pace.
- Not all students respond positively to any one teaching method.
- Flexible grouping practices lead to better learning outcomes.

# What characterizes a differentiated learning environment ?

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- Goal is maximum academic growth for all students in an environment that respects individual differences.
- Learning experiences are based on diagnosis of readiness, prescription and application of a lesson that will move the student forward, assessment of the efficacy of the application, and repeating the process continuously *for all students*.

# What characterizes a differentiated learning environment ?

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- Content standards are clear to teacher and students; learning time for mastery will vary between students,
- All students are engaged in relevant, meaningful learning activities. (Tomlinson)
- Flexible grouping is routine and is adjusted regularly.

# What characterizes a differentiated learning environment ?

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- Assessment and instruction are always linked, and a variety of assessment tools are used.
- Students' interests and learning styles are incorporated into curriculum whenever possible.
- Add your ideas.....

# Principles of Teaching Gifted Students

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## LESS PRESSURE ON PERFECTION: CONSISTENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRUGGLE AND CHALLENGE

Students must:

- Know that intelligence is not diminished by struggle
- Value individual differences
- Have access to the teacher as they work on extended curriculum

# Principles of Teaching Gifted Students

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## PRE-TEST WHERE CONTENT MAY BE ALREADY MASTERED

- Spelling, vocabulary, handwriting, basic skills in any subject
- “Compact” regular curriculum into shorter time periods
- Extension activities available; grades come from regular work
- Some misbehaviors or careless work may indicate lack of sufficient learning challenge

# Principles of Teaching Gifted Students

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## FASTER PACING THROUGH NEW CONTENT

- Use of study guides and extension menus
- Assessments more important than daily work
- Ongoing projects that connect to content and student's interest

# Principles of Teaching Gifted Students

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## ALTERNATE ACTIVITIES FOR THOSE WHO NEED THEM

- Extensions of regular curriculum
- Opportunities for independent study
- Connection to personal interest

# Compacting and Differentiation Strategies

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## COOPERATIVE LEARNING

- Students experiencing differentiation work together
- Tutoring or helping others learn should be voluntary
- Avoid group grades; find other evaluation methods

# The Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model (SCGM)

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From The Cluster Grouping Handbook: How to Challenge Gifted Students and Improve Achievement for All  
by Susan Winebrenner and Dina Brulles.



[www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)

# *Suggested classroom composition for cluster grouping using the SCGM*

30 students in 3 classes	Gifted	High Average	Average	Low Average	Far Below Average
<b>A</b>	6	0	12	12	0
<b>B</b>	0	6	12	6	6
<b>C</b>	0	6	12	6	6

# Journal for Educating the Gifted

Winter 2010

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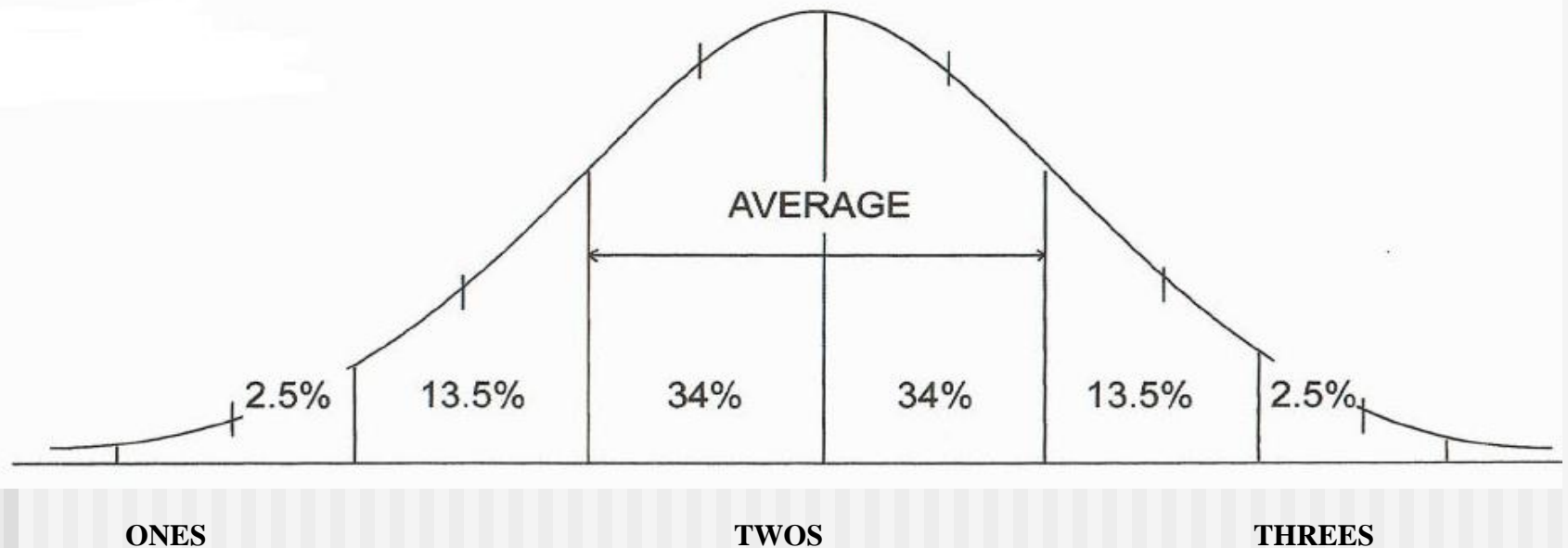
## **Improving Performance for Gifted Students in a Cluster Grouping Model**

Dina Brulles  
Sanford J. Cohn  
Arizona State University

Rachel Saunders  
Cartwright Elementary School District, Arizona

*Although experts in gifted education widely promote cluster grouping gifted students, little empirical evidence is available to attest to its effectiveness. This study is an example of comparative action research in the form of a quantitative case study that focused on the mandated cluster grouping practices for gifted students in an urban elementary school district. Some school administrators chose not to follow the model as designed, resulting in the emergence of two groups: gifted students in cluster-grouped classrooms and those in regular heterogeneous classrooms. This action research project analyzed achievement in mathematics for subgroups that included gender, grade levels, ethnicity, and English language learner status. Results indicate that the gifted students in gifted cluster classes demonstrated statistically significant and scientifically meaningful achievement growth, regardless of their demographic group.*

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# Group gifted students the same way as special education students

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Students with exceptional educational needs are often grouped together by similar characteristics and placed with teachers who have been trained to teach them effectively.

Likewise, gifted students should be grouped together in groups of 4-8 in otherwise heterogeneous groups instead of being purposefully separated.

Their teacher should have some gifted education training in order to teach them effectively.

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# Classroom placements:

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- Determine placement for upcoming year following spring testing
- Gifted students make up approximately 20% of the gifted cluster class
- Create the number of gifted cluster classrooms as required to serve all gifted students in each grade.
- “Front-load” the gifted cluster class so students who enter the school during the year are not placed into that class.

# Step-by-Step to student placement

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1. Place all gifted identified students into designated gifted cluster classrooms.
2. Next, place high average students into classrooms that have not been assigned the gifted cluster.
3. Place average students evenly in all classrooms.
4. Place low average students in all classrooms
5. Place far below average ability students only in the classes that do not have the gifted cluster.

# Special considerations when making placements

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Procedures need to be created and followed determining placement for the following groups:

- Kindergarten students
- New students enrolling during school year
- Twice-exceptional gifted students
- Non-productive gifted students
- CLD & ELL gifted students

# Isn't cluster grouping the same as tracking?

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No. In tracking, students are grouped into classrooms with others of comparable ability and remain together throughout their school years. Curriculum is based on the ability of the average students in the class.

When clustered, all classes have a range of abilities. Teachers modify or extend grade level standards according to the students' needs and abilities.

# Why should gifted students be placed in a cluster group instead of being assigned to all classes?

## Gifted students:

- Need to spend time learning with others of like ability to experience challenge and make academic progress
- Better understand their learning differences when they are with peers



*Teachers are more likely to differentiate curriculum when there is a group of gifted students*

# Can I create small groups of gifted students in *all* classes?



*The desired outcomes of the SCGM become greatly diminished when doing so because:*

- Teachers have a full range of abilities
- There are no opportunities for gifted education leadership at the grade level
- There is less accountability for teachers to facilitate progress of their gifted learners
- Teachers feel a decreased need to identify gifted students
- Students learning needs are less apparent
- Providing appropriate teacher training becomes difficult

# Why is it so difficult to teach gifted students in totally heterogeneous classes?



- Teachers have a full range of abilities
- There is less accountability for teachers to facilitate progress of their gifted learners
- Teachers feel a decreased need to identify gifted students
- Students' learning needs are less apparent
- Providing appropriate teacher training becomes difficult

# Won't the creation of a cluster group rob the other classes of academic leadership?

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- With either gifted or high achieving students in every class, all classes have academic leaders
- Gifted students do not make the best academic leaders because they make intuitive leaps, and therefore do not always appear to have to work as hard as others
- High ability students have new opportunities to become academic leaders



# What are some advantages of the SCGM?

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- Grouping all gifted children in a regular classroom provides social, emotional, and academic advantages for them.
- Complements other gifted program components
- Teachers can focus instruction to better meet all their students academic needs
- Achievement rises for most students
- Schools provide full-time gifted services with *little additional costs*

# What are potential challenges of cluster grouping?

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- Parental pressure to place their children who have not been identified as gifted into the gifted cluster classroom
- Serving students who identify during the school year
- Lack of recognition by administrators that each class should have a smaller range and that appropriate staff development is essential.

# Areas of Identification

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- Verbal (V)  
Correlates with Reading & Writing
- Quantitative (Q)  
Correlates with Mathematics
- Non Verbal (NV)  
Correlates with abstract reasoning in all content areas – identifies gifted ability in *general*



# Nominating & testing procedures: using multiple identification criteria

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Input can include intelligence or ability tests combined with:

- Achievement tests
- Teacher observations
- Anecdotal evidence from parents
- Performance-based evidence
  
- “Best practice” **REQUIRES** use of at least two types of identification tools

# Including Culturally and Linguistically Diverse gifted students in gifted cluster classrooms

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- Use “non-verbal” tests that do not rely on language
- Use matrices that examine intellectual assessment, achievement, classroom performance, and informed observations
- Evaluate learning behaviors, motivation, social abilities, leadership, creativity, and problem-solving abilities

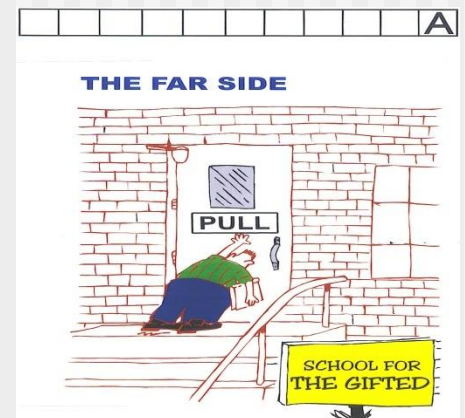


# Including twice-exceptional (2e) students in gifted cluster classrooms

- Gifted students *can* have a learning disability or attention deficit disorder
- 2e students should receive the same gifted services as other gifted identified students
- Some gifted students are misdiagnosed as having ADHD

## Gifted Cluster Teachers should:

- teach to the areas of strength
- teach appropriate compensation strategies when needed
- allow for student-directed learning



# Including non-productive gifted students in the gifted cluster classroom

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- May not see the need to complete assignments
- May feel unmotivated by required work that does not hold their interest or challenge them
- Are sometimes afraid to fail, so never *begin*

## **Gifted Cluster Teachers can:**

- Give credit for previously mastered content
- Allow students to do more challenging work
- Teach students to set their own goals
- Acknowledge and show appreciation for effort
- Allow for student-directed learning opportunities based on their interests and strengths

# Effective cluster teachers know how to:

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- Understand and implement the SCGM
- Recognize gifted potential in all populations
- Pay attention to students' social/emotional needs
- Identify students who needs learning accommodations
- Compact and differentiate
- Form flexible learning groups
- Integrate basic skills and higher order thinking skills
- Consistently make learning extensions available
- Use appropriate assessments and grading practices
- Develop student's abilities to self-direct
- Build effective parent/teacher partnerships

# Positive achievement effects of The SCGM:

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- Narrowed range of abilities allows for more focused instruction
- On-going assessment of students' strengths and need ensures continual progress
- Teachers learn strategies for advanced ability learners they can use for all students, not just the gifted students
- Gifted ELL students are more likely to receive advanced instruction and extended learning opportunities
- Higher expectations for all students
- Teachers who “rotate out” of gifted cluster classes continue to use the same highly effective techniques

# Administrators Observation Checklist

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- Pretests are used to document previous mastery
- Students are working on extension activities with teacher supervision
- Student interest is incorporated into their project
- Extension opportunities are available to all students
- Homework is differentiated
- Risk taking is encouraged

■ Present

Absent

# In Summary, The SCGM objectives are...

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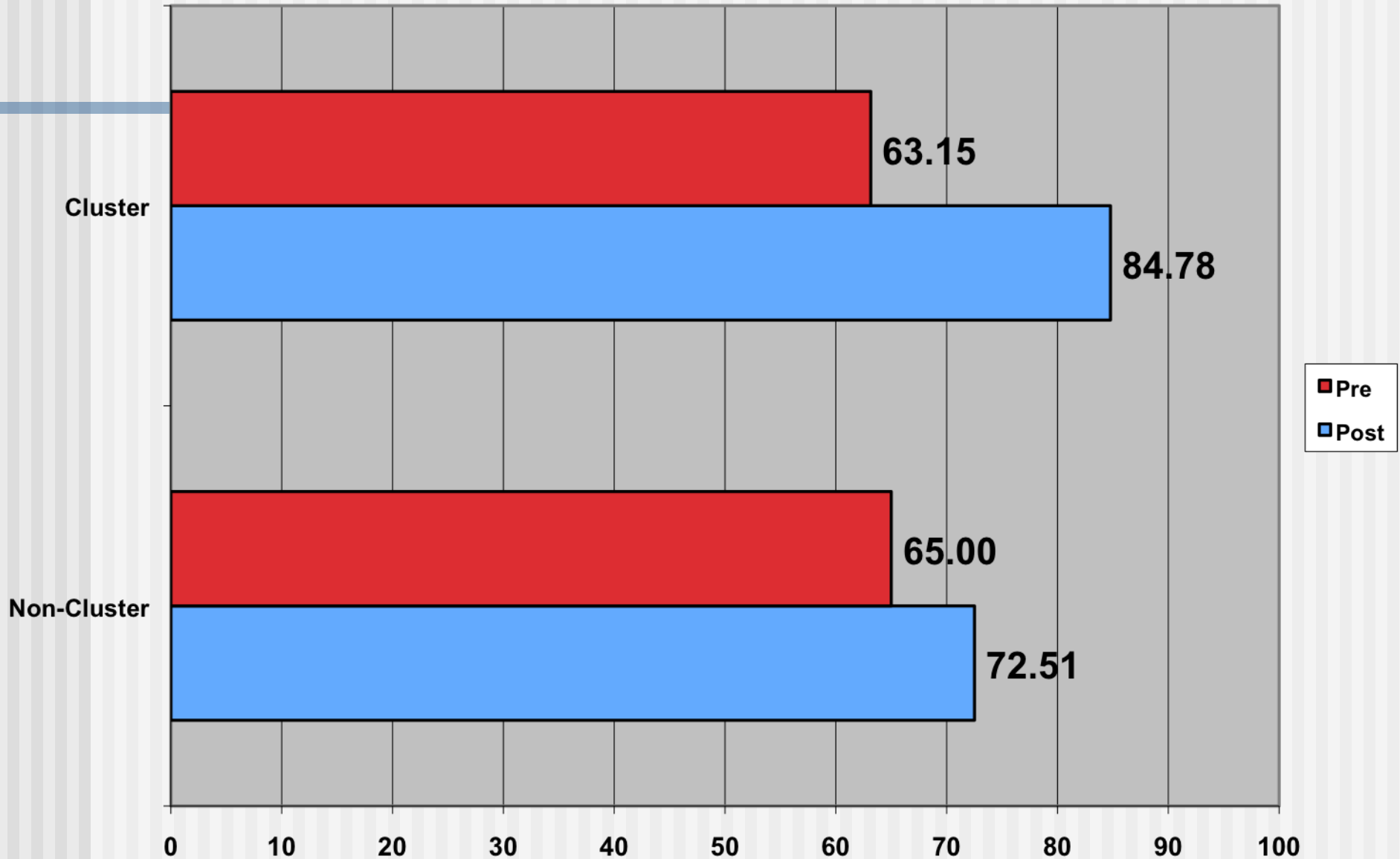
- To benefit *all* students in the grade level by increasing the opportunity for planned differentiation due to the reduction in the range of ability levels in the classroom.
- To provide high ability students with a rigorous, faster paced curriculum and instruction in a group of their intellectual peers, delivered by one teacher, to ensure continuous progress in learning.

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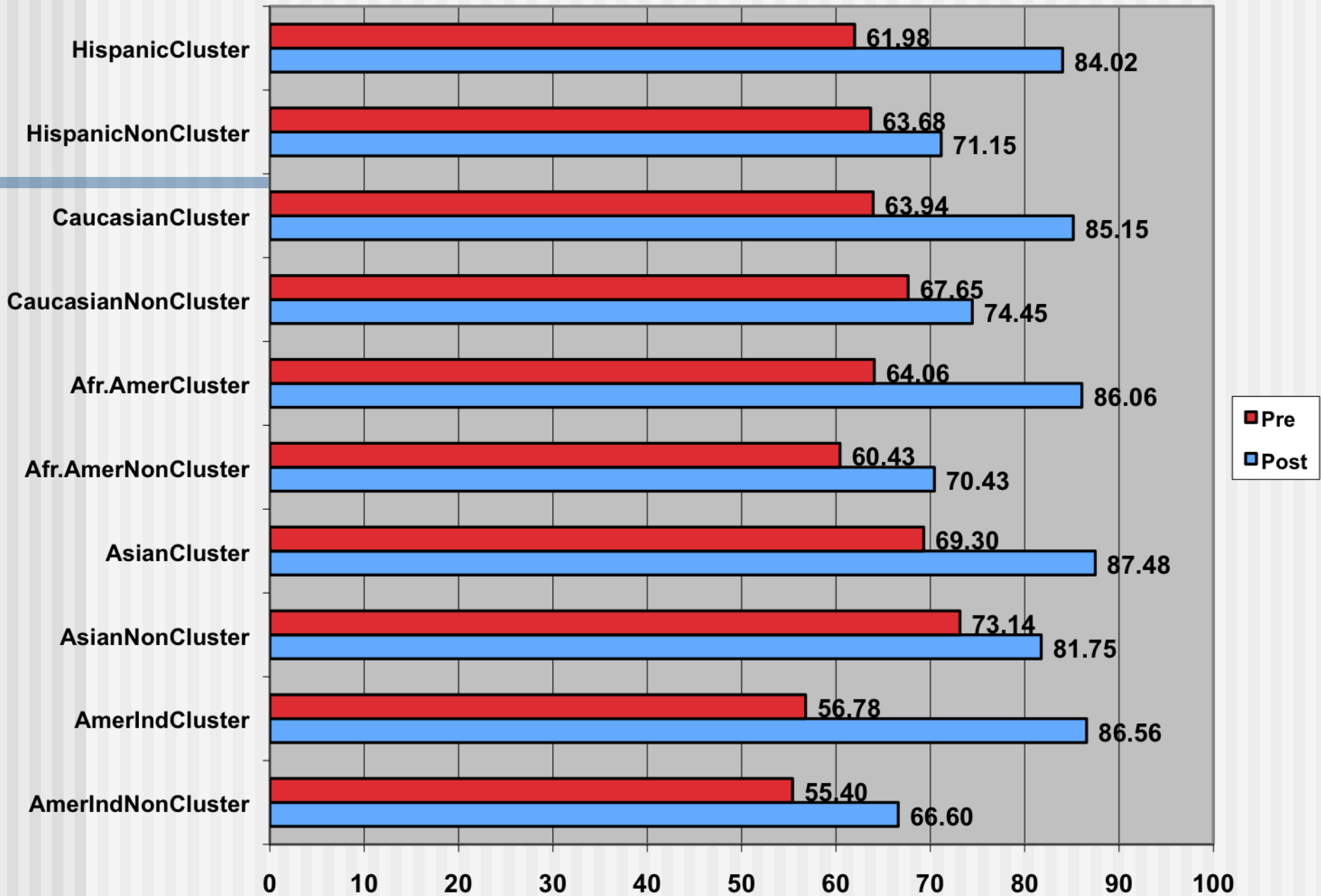
# Academic Effects of Clustering on Gifted Students

Please do not distribute the  
research data until the Fall of  
2011. It has not yet been formally  
published.

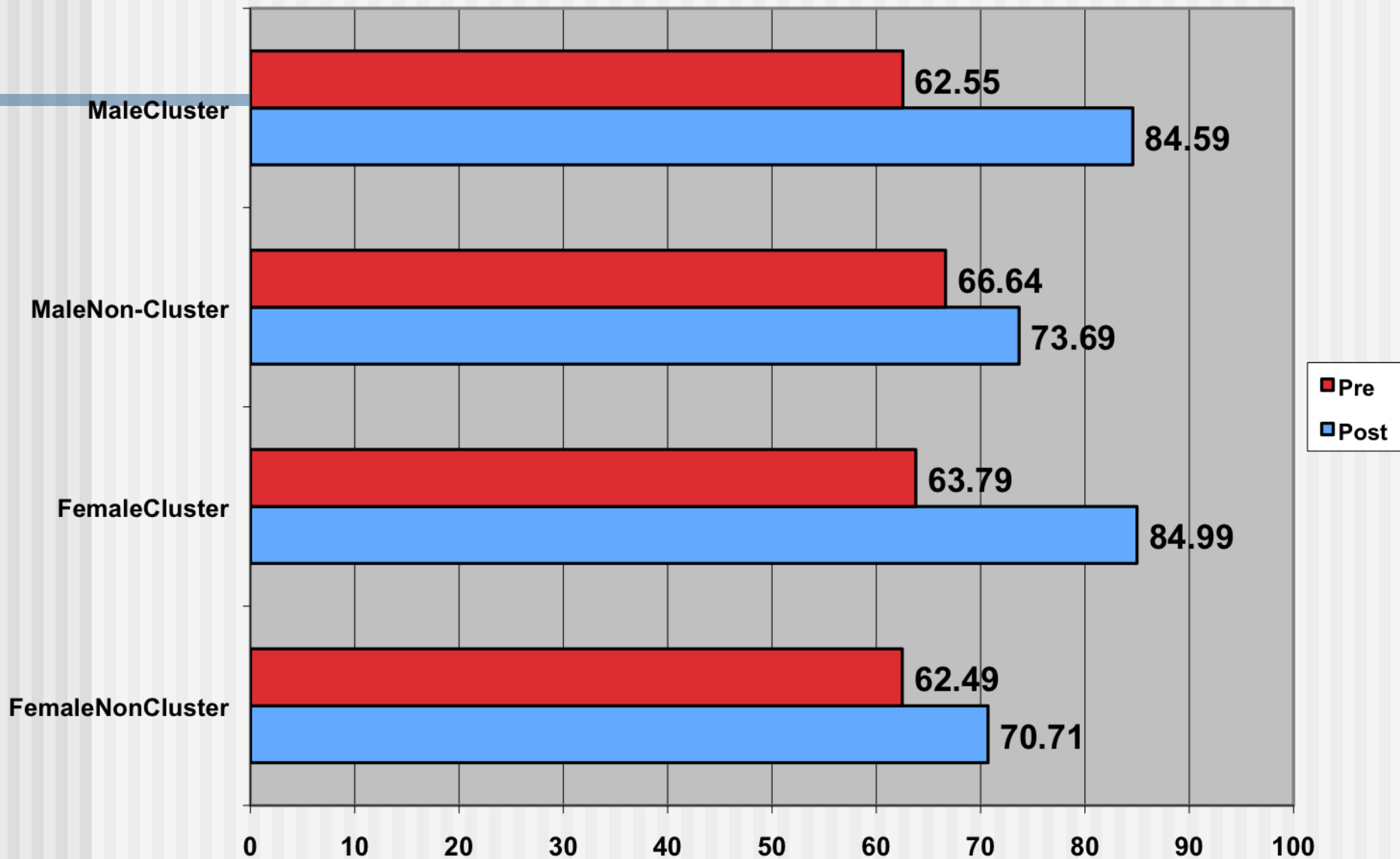
# Overall Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering for Gifted Students



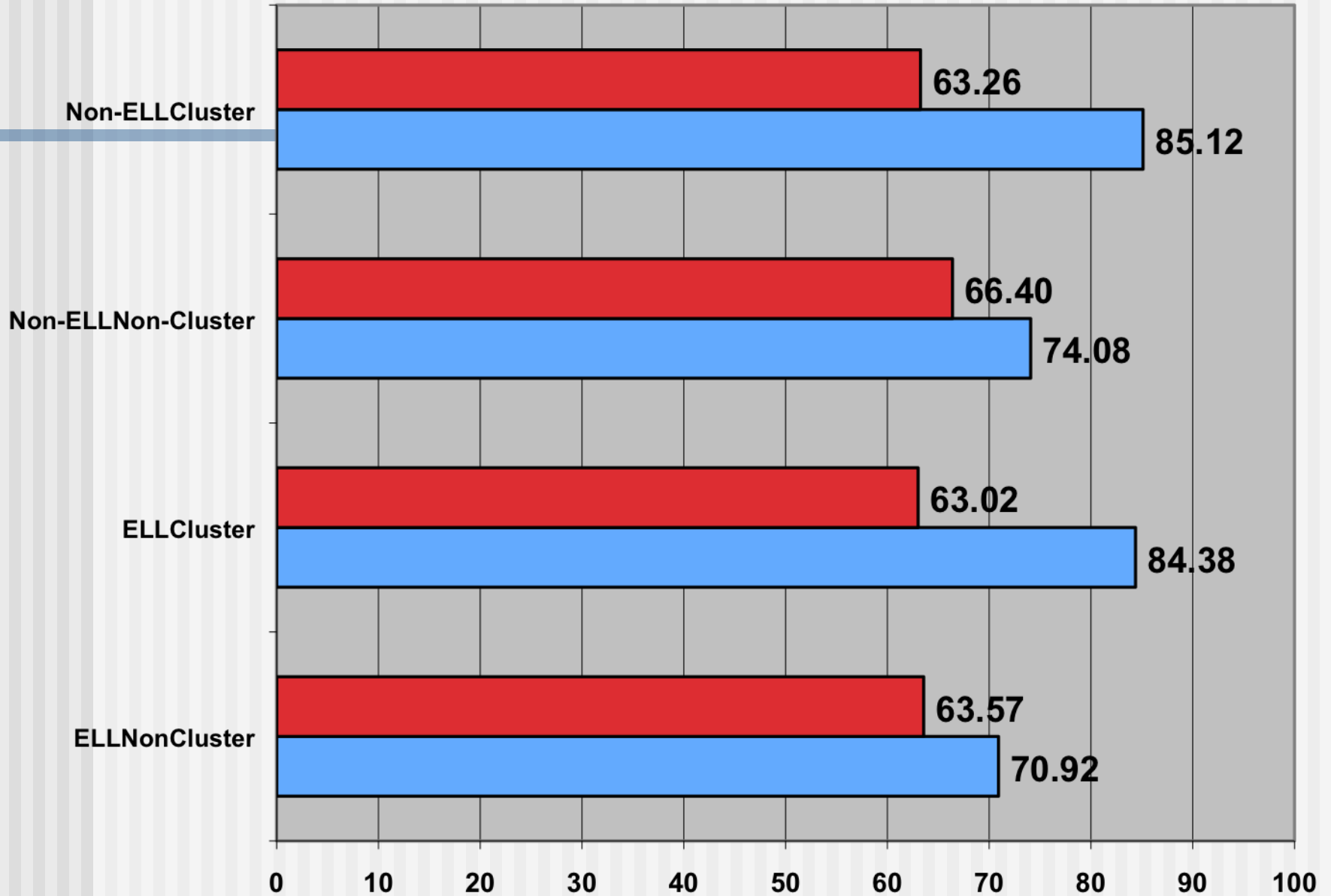
# Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering Based on Ethnicity



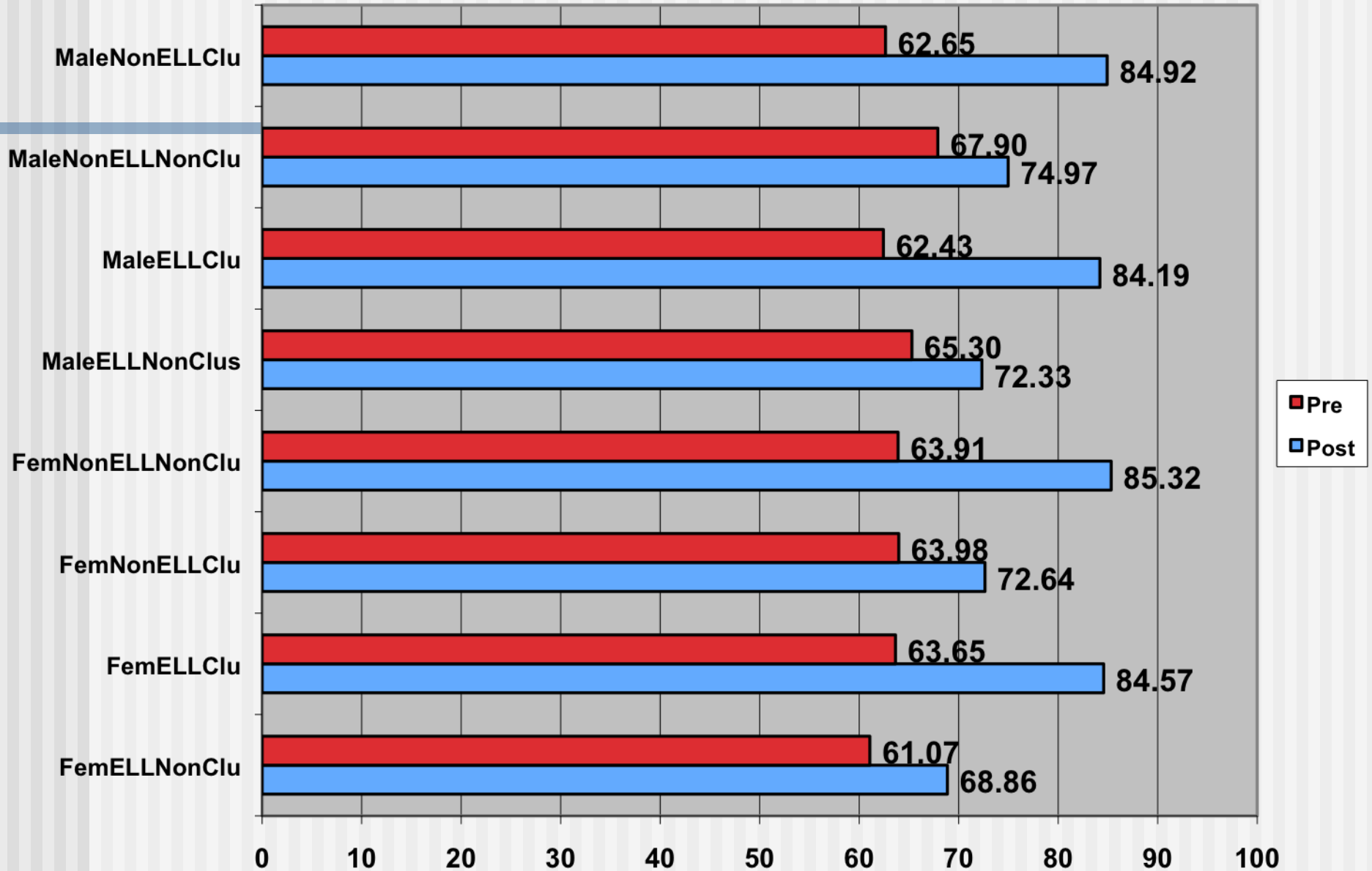
# Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering Based on Gender



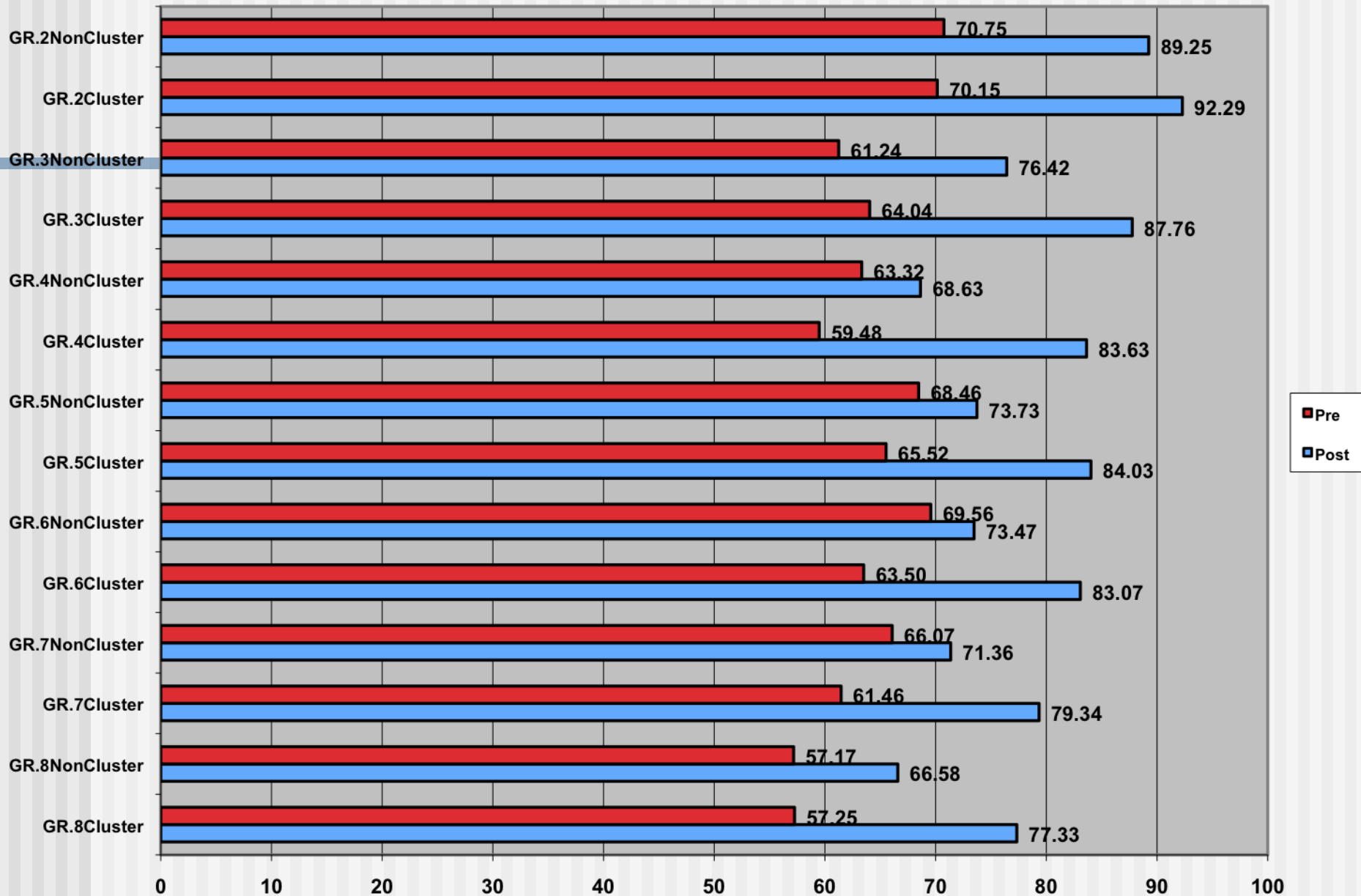
# Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non-Clustering Based on ELL/Non-ELL Status



# Academic Effects of Clustering vs. Non Clustering Based on Gender and ELL-Non ELL Status



# Academic Effects of Clustering Based on Grade Level



# The Jesse James Syndrome

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All the time I just sat there.....  
Waiting for something *new* to learn!  
My teachers should have ridden  
with Jesse James.....  
For all the learning time  
they have stolen from me!



A 10 year old boy quoting from  
Rommel Rides Deep Into  
Egypt by Richard Brautigan,  
American poet

Joyce, B. and Showers, B. *Student Achievement Through Staff Development*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. ASCD 2008  
**Demonstrates the Power of Peer Coaching**

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<b>PD model</b>	<b>1 week later</b>	<b>1 month later</b>	<b>3 months later</b>
Lecture only	30%	20%	10%
Lecture with demonstration	30%	20%	15%
Lecture with participation & practice	35%	30%	18%
Lecture with practice and on-site peer coaching	????	????	????

# References and Resources

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- **Bronson, Po.** *How Not to Talk to Your Kids. Summarizes Dweck's research.*
- [www.nymag.com](http://www.nymag.com); or the book *Nurture Shock*
- **Brulles, Dina et al. (Winter, 2011).** *Improving Performance for Gifted Students in a Cluster Grouping Model in Journal for the Education of the Gifted, Winter, 2011.*
- **Dweck, Carol.** *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.* Available from amazon.com
- **Winebrenner, S.** *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom.* [www.freespiri.com](http://www.freespiri.com)
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- **Wulf-Uwe Meyer.** *Research on praise (work done in German) Summarized by Cathy Arnst in Bloomberg's Business Week by Cathy Arnst, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007.*