



Saint Stephen's College

THE
OPTIMA
PROGRAM
PERFORMING ARTS

THE OPTIMA PROGRAM

At Saint Stephen's College we strive to promote engagement and challenge each child's individual potential in relation to intellectual, creative, social-emotional and physical domains.

We aim to support every student to achieve their educational potential, through talent development opportunities and differentiated teaching and learning practices to ensure that their specific learning and well-being needs are met.



HIGH POTENTIAL AND GIFTED ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL FRAMEWORK

At Saint Stephen's College, a multifaceted approach is taken for accommodating the needs of High Potential and Gifted (HPG) students. HPG students have unique social, emotional, and learning needs, which should be recognised, valued and catered for appropriately. Saint Stephen's is committed to meeting the needs of this unique group of students through The Optima Program.

The Optima Program framework is based on the theories of Gagne and recognises the four domains of High Potential and Giftedness: Intellectual, Creative, Social-Emotional and Physical.

What is the Optima Program?

The Optima Program offers students the chance to work in learning situations which are structured for highly motivated and gifted students with above average ability, who are willing to work in a challenging environment within their domain/s of potential or giftedness. The Optima programs gather together students who have demonstrated both ability and a willingness to participate actively in College life. Students will demonstrate their ability to work both independently and in productive partnerships.

How does a student gain entry to the Optima Program?

Consistent with the Saint Stephen's College High Potential and Gifted Policy, a transparent and ethical process using multiple criteria and tools appropriate to the College community will be used to identify students for the program.

Specific Skills

Successful Academic and Social-Emotional Optima students are characterised by high levels of aptitudes and skills, evidence of which include:

- Above average results in key areas
- An inquiring approach and independent, autonomous learning skills
- Being a reader by choice
- Expressing ideas and information confidently and creatively in a variety of communication modes
- Interest in gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding of their strengths
- NAPLAN and academic competition results
- Showing thoughtful consideration of own learning.

Monitoring of Optima Students

The progress of participants in the Optima Program is reviewed regularly. Students who demonstrate through their results and overall readiness that they would benefit from placement in an Optima Program may be offered a place during their learning experience at Saint Stephen's College. Students in Optima are expected to maintain a commitment to participation in extra curricular activities and the overall life of the College.

HIGH POTENTIAL AND GIFTED EDUCATION FLOWCHART

Nomination

Teacher, parent/guardian or student notifies the Principal of a potentially High Potential or Gifted student as outlined in the related College documentation.

Assessment for Identification

Evidence is collected to accurately identify the gifts and talents of students using measures that may include but not limited to:

- Teacher or parents/guardian checklists
- Psychological assessments
- Self-identification
- Interviews
- Other relevant information
- Coaches, Tutors recommendation
- Anecdotal evidence
- Student work
- Curriculum-based assessment and reporting
- Education history
- Medical History

Validation

Principal or principal's delegate determines High Potential or Gifted status of student, based on the evidence provided.

Identified as High Potential or Gifted.

Placement and/or Modification Recommendation

Principal or Principal's delegate consults with parents/guardians, psychologist, teachers, and other professionals as necessary to determine the one or more key elements that will best meet the needs of the student.

Individual Education Plans (IEP) are developed when:

- the case management process recommends the development of an IEP
- a student undergoes subject or whole-grade acceleration
- a student is identified as having dual exceptionalities
- a parent or guardian requests an IEP for an identified student

Evaluation

Regular and ongoing evidence-based review of student progress, strategies and provisions.

Transition

The College implements a transition process through the transition phases of Year 6 to year 7 and Year 9 to Year 10 that acknowledges and supports the high potential or gifted student as the student progresses through their schooling.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE OPTIMA PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAM

Differentiation

Optima students will be identified in their specific area of high potential or giftedness. These students will be catered for through an accelerated or broadened curriculum. We have an inquiry-based focus to learning, which supports differentiation in the classroom. Optima students will be identified to staff within their class and provided with appropriate data to allow them to make informed learning pathways for these students.

Grouping and Extension

At times, Optima students will be taken out of the normal classroom setting and grouped with students of similar ability and focus to undertake challenging and educationally appropriate programs to meet their specific needs.

School, State, Nationwide and Global Competitions

Optima students are encouraged to participate in a range of competitions within their High Potential or Gifted domains.

Acceleration within the Current Class - Curriculum Compacting

Allows students to remain in the same class but accelerate through the normal curriculum, allowing them to advance in the relevant subject area.

Subject Acceleration

A developmentally appropriate placement of students ahead of their chronological age or their chronological peers in one or more subjects or by one or more whole years of learning, if the timetable can accommodate it.

IEP (Individual Learning Plan)

A learning plan tailored to highly gifted students developed through consultation with all stakeholders.

Talent Workshops

Specialised workshops for identified students in specialist areas (BRAINways) clinics.

Enrichment

Embedded programs that provide opportunities to enhance, extend and enrich students' education through programs run outside the regular classroom.

Mentors

Where appropriate, students may be paired with a mentor to assist their potential and cope with unique needs.

Partnership with External Agencies

Identified students are linked to university partnerships for enhanced learning and progressive pathways.

Independent Study

High Potential and Gifted students often achieve greater success and higher levels of engagement using independent study. This can be facilitated through the iCentre where students can be supervised.

Differentiated Homework

Homework can be tailored to meet the needs of Optima students, without increasing the burden of homework quantity.

The Performing Arts Optima Program begins with the Chamber Music Excellence Program.

This Program features our most talented senior strings students alongside other musicians in invitation and auditioned groups including duos, quartets and quintets. It is aimed at those students pursuing excellence on their instrument to perform and compete at the highest level. Students participate in the Chamber Music Excellence groups on top of their already busy co-curricular activities and rehearse professional level repertoire.

Recent performances include Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A Major, Tchaikovsky's String Quartet No. 1 and the challenging String Quartet No. 14 'Death and the Maiden' by Schubert. Our Senior String Quartet has consistently placed at the Gold Coast Eisteddfod, competing in the 'open' category and often as the only group with members all from the same school.

Students will strive to be part of the Chamber Music Excellence Program by taking part in the Emerging Chamber Music Program. As part of this program, students from Years 5 to 8 participate in junior and intermediate quartets to learn the craft of chamber music and develop their ensemble skills.

The Chamber Music Excellence Program is coached by our Strings Coordinator, Mr Sam Konise. Sam is a violinist originally from New Zealand. He has completed his studies at the University of Canterbury, San Francisco Conservatory of Music and also Schola Music, the training ground for members of the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra. Prior to joining Saint Stephen's College, Sam was the head of the Performance Program at the University of Waikato and leader of the Turnovsky Trio, one of New Zealand's most renowned chamber music ensembles.

Alongside the Chamber Music Excellence Program, Saint Stephen's College has delivered industry specific courses, enabling students to complete qualifications relevant to the music industry. Normally only available through external providers, the Certificate III in Music (Performance) course is delivered on campus by our qualified teachers. Students in Year 10 undertake this course to hone their performance skills, learn about the music industry and develop their musical careers. As well as rehearsing and performing in our purpose-built Recital Hall, students have access to a working recording studio and learn how to set up for sessions and record their class band. In partnership with the Queensland College of Music, the Certificate III in Music (Performance) encourages to spread their wings and prepare for a life in the music industry.

Alongside the Optima Chamber Music Excellence Program, we have also begun development of the Optima Voices. This program features a small group of our most talented Senior College vocal students, who learn and perform repertoire with a focus on musical theatre. Students audition for places within the Optima Voices, and must be a minimum equivalent AMEB grade requirement. They will learn and perform repertoire with a focus on musical theatre and contemporary music, participating in extra choral rehearsals each week as well as undertaking specific vocal technique sessions to develop their skills. As part of our Optima pathways, students in Years 4 to 6 will also be invited to audition for our Optima Emerging Voices. These students will learn and rehearse alongside those in the Optima Voices who will also act as mentors for our younger singers.

The Optima Vocal Program is led by our vocal tutor and Senior College Musical director Caroline Taylor. Caroline studied Musical Theatre at Central Queensland University and later obtained her Masters of Music Studies (Voice) from the Queensland Conservatorium Griffith University. She has been a regular performer and vocal coach on the Gold Coast for a number of years and has worked on musicals such as Grease, Mamma Mia, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat and many more.



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