

GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION

OVERVIEW AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does it mean when someone says a child is gifted and talented? It generally means that the child is demonstrating characteristics that other children of the same age do not demonstrate. There are many lists available of characteristics that gifted children display and they do not have to demonstrate all of them all of the time. A child who is gifted may:

- seem just plain smart in a lot of areas including some that might surprise you
- grasp new ideas and concepts more readily than children of the same age
- understand ideas and concepts more deeply than other children their age
- come up with new ideas and concepts on their own and apply them in creative and interesting ways
- easily memorise facts, lists, dates and names
- have an excellent memory and never forget a thing (“but you promised”)
- learn new material and learn new things more easily and quickly than other children their age
- really love to learn (this may or may not include loving school)
- enjoy playing challenging games and making elaborate plans – the more complex the better
- have friends who are older (because they need someone to match wits and interests with)
- enjoy books, movies, games and activities meant for older children or even adults
- know many things that other children their age seem totally unaware of. (Galbrieth, 2000, p6).

It is important to recognise that gifted students are found in all community groups. This is regardless of socio-economic, cultural or ethnic background. It is also important to recognise that gifted children may have a disability or a specific learning disorder. These students may be referred to as twice exceptional, double labelled, or gifted with a learning disability (GLD). Children from these groups will need different methods for identification as gifted.

A question parents often ask is, “I think my child is gifted but how can I be sure?” Parents and carers know their children better than anyone and they are often the best judge of their child’s ability and potential. Guidance can also be taken from the occasional comments of extended family members, teachers, sporting and social group friends. The ACT Education and Training Directorate’s (the Directorate) Identification Parent Fact Sheet provides some useful information on identifying gifted children.

Parents and carers often wonder how best to help their gifted child. It is important to remember that they are children first and as such will at times display childish behaviours as well as behaviours expected of older children. A four year old child who reads at a Year 4 level is still a pre-schooler and a six year old who can do Year 6 maths problems may still lose their school hat. This is called asynchronous development and can be frustrating to parents and teachers.

Parents and carers should be guided by their child and their interests. Taking them to the library, museums, art galleries, movies etc, and making books, magazines, games,

etc freely available. Learn about giftedness in order to become an advocate for your child. Support groups are a wonderful source of information and activities. They provide parents and children with the opportunity to mix with other parents going through the same issues and provide the children with the opportunity to mix with a group of like-minded peers. The internet provides access to some excellent resources for both parents and children and also opportunities to be part of online gifted networks.

Sometimes a gifted child will show impatience with others who are not at the same level as them and may demonstrate inappropriate behaviour. It is important that parents and teachers teach children social skills and how to get along with others.

Another question that is often asked is how giftedness is defined. In the research literature there are many definitions and even the experts do not always agree on a single 'correct' definition. Currently in Australia the definition most commonly used by education departments was developed by François Gagné.

In simple terms Gagné says that gifted people have natural abilities. These natural abilities are classified into two groups: mental abilities and physical abilities. The mental group includes: intellectual, creative, social and perception abilities. The physical includes muscular and motor control abilities. Gagné then says that these abilities are translated into talents. This is achieved through what Gagné calls catalysts which are various aspects of a gifted child's environment – both external to the child, like schooling, and internal, like intrapersonal skills. A person can be gifted without being talented. This just means that their natural abilities have not been developed into achievement. But a person cannot be talented without first being gifted i.e. having the natural ability.

Gifted and talented children are a diverse group of students both in terms of the types of abilities they possess and the levels of giftedness. Different educational provisions are needed for students depending on their level of giftedness.

Gifted children will need an educational program that is different from other children their age. The Directorate has a **Gifted and Talented Students Policy** which clearly outlines the responsibilities of school staff with respect to providing an appropriate education for gifted students. An appropriate program may include but is not limited to various types of grouping and acceleration. Grouping can take many forms including: full time ability grouping, multi-age classrooms, grouping by ability/achievement for specific subjects, cluster grouping, within class grouping, pull out/withdrawal programs and like ability cooperative grouping. Acceleration means advancing the gifted child through the school year levels at a faster rate, either in individual subjects or by whole year for all studies.

The Gifted and Talented Parent Fact Sheets listed below are available on the Directorate's website at www.det.act.gov.au.

1. Giftedness and Talent
2. Identification
3. Social-Emotional Needs
4. Gifted Underachievers
5. Dual Exceptionality
6. Differentiation
7. Grouping
8. Programs & Provisions
9. Subject Acceleration
10. Whole-grade Acceleration
11. Early Entry to School
12. Communicating with Schools
13. Myths and Facts

Frequently Asked Questions

What should I do if I think my child is gifted?

If you think your child is gifted, there are a number of options available to you in addition to the support you will find at your child's school. These include support groups, websites and books. You may wish to use the resources listed below to learn more about gifted and talented children.

You might also like to begin to collect information about your child that you may wish to discuss with your child's school to ensure their needs are met. The school will also be able to provide you with information on gifted and talented education programs that may be available for your child.

Is my child gifted?

Parents often ask if their child is gifted. The answer is not always easy because gifted children are individuals. If you are wondering if your child is gifted, take a look at common characteristics they may exhibit and see how many of them fit your child. How quickly your child reached developmental milestones may also be an indicator of giftedness. Some characteristics that gifted children may demonstrate are:

- High curiosity, explores how and why
- Intense interests
- Excellent memory
- Long attention span
- Excellent reasoning skills
- Quickly and easily sees relationships in ideas, objects, or facts
- Fluent and flexible thinking
- Elaborate and original thinking
- Excellent problem solving skills
- Learns quickly and with less practice and repetition
- Unusual and/or vivid imagination
- Keen observation
- Rapid language development as a child
- Advanced interests
- Emotional intensity and sensitivity
- Perfectionism
- Self-doubt
- Feeling of being different

Is there a difference between a Gifted child and a Talented child?

The Directorate, in their Gifted and Talented Students Policy, has used Gagné's definitions for 'giftedness' and 'talent' is one used by many education departments in Australia. Gagné's definitions for giftedness and talent are that:

GIFTEDNESS designates the possession and use of outstanding natural abilities, called aptitudes, in at least one ability domain, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers.

TALENT designates the outstanding mastery of systematically developed abilities, called competencies (knowledge and skills), in at least one field of human activity to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers who are or have been active in that field (Gagné, 2009).

If one child in the family is gifted, is it possible that the other children are gifted also?

Yes. Research indicates that in many cases siblings are within ten IQ points of each other (Silverman, 2013). If one child is gifted, it is quite possible that the other children are gifted, too.

How do I nurture my gifted child?

Discovering your child is gifted often has parents or carers asking what to do about it. You may have noticed advanced behaviours in your child or it may have been pointed out to you by others. Some parents worry that they will do the wrong things or that they don't have the ability to keep up with their gifted children. The important thing is to be guided by your child and with a little understanding and creativity you will come up with ideas that will develop your child's giftedness. Joining a gifted association for example, will provide you with a support network of other parents and carers. An association will also provide possible playmates for your child. Some resources are listed at the end of this document.

What should the school be doing to develop my gifted child?

All ACT public schools are implementing the Directorate's Gifted and Talented Students Policy which outlines the responsibilities of the principal and staff in meeting the needs of gifted students in their school. The Policy is available on the ACT Education and Training website at www.det.act.gov.au. In addition, the Directorate has developed fact sheets for parents that provide some basic information about different aspects of giftedness and gifted and talented education. All schools have also been provided with a copy of the Gifted Education Research Resource & Information Centre's Gifted Talented Education Professional Development Package for Teachers that was developed through a grant from the Australian Government Department of Education. In addition, school staff are provided with the opportunity to undertake some professional learning in gifted education.

What is a Gifted and Talented Liaison Officer and what are their roles?

The Gifted and Talented Liaison Officer (GaTLO) is a designated school based position that provides liaison between the Directorate and schools. The role of the GaTLO is to inform schools on up to date gifted and talented trends and practices to assist schools in making decisions on how best to provide gifted and talented programs.

Are there any costs for parents for schools to meet the needs of gifted students?

All ACT public schools can request voluntary contributions for additional resources to support specific subjects or assist the school in the provision of specific activities and services. At times, schools may also ask parents or carers of a child enrolled at the school, to make voluntary contributions for activities outside of the curriculum such as; academic competitions, activities provided by external providers that are not essential to but enrich curriculum outcomes, private tutoring, courses, and excursions and special activities.

Should you wish to discuss any requests for voluntary contributions you should contact the school principal who can address any questions you may have.

How do I apply for early entry for my child to commence school before schooling age?

Where parents or carers are considering early entry for their child, they should contact the school principal as soon as practicable. If possible, parents or carers should provide a portfolio of evidence to assist with any consideration of early entry.

Should I get my child tested?

If you have concerns and feel your child's academic needs are not being met, has learning difficulties, or is underachieving, some form of assessment may be useful. You need to discuss this with the appropriate person at your child's school. Asking questions may also help you decide whether to have your child tested or not. Questions could include:

- Why am I having my child tested?
- What am I going to do with the information?

The type of test used will also depend on the reasons for having your child tested. Testing is only one way gifted students can be identified.

Does giftedness affect behaviour?

Giftedness can be described as asynchronous (uneven) development (Morelock, 1991). For example, a child's cognitive skills may far exceed the physical skills needed for written work that demonstrates their advanced thinking. Understanding adults are needed in order to cope with the ensuing frustrations of the child. Social and emotional issues are part of parenting a gifted child. Gifted children often show a greater sensitivity and perceptiveness to the needs of others and to the environment generally.

They can feel very different from their age peers and often prefer to be with adults or older children who may or may not accept them. They may be reading books enjoyed by much older children. Gifted children often set themselves unattainable goals and because of their perfectionist tendencies may experience high levels of frustration.

How reliable is it to use “intense interests” to identify giftedness?

Intense interests are one characteristic of a gifted child, and when pursuing that intense interest, a child may display some of the other characteristics of giftedness.

Can boredom cause behaviour problems in school?

Gifted children if not provided with a differentiated education program may become disengaged and bored and this may lead to the student exhibiting inappropriate behaviours in the classroom.

If my child has a disability, can they also be gifted or talented?

Yes. It is possible for your child to be both gifted and have a physical or learning disability, more information on this can be found in the Dual Exceptionality Fact Sheet.

Who should I contact to find out more about gifted and talented education?

Under the Directorate’s Gifted and Talented Students Policy, your child’s school is required to nominate a school contact for parents for all enquiries regarding gifted and talented education. The school’s front office can provide you with the details of the nominated school contact.

Resources

Every state and territory in Australia has a gifted association and each has resources to varying degrees to support you and your child. Many of these organisations are also affiliated with the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT) which is also a rich source of information. All state and territory education authorities also have websites which include information and resources on gifted and talented education.

GLD Australia is a national online learning community responding to the needs of gifted children and gifted adults with a specific learning disability or other learning challenges, and the needs of those who care for, teach and advocate for them, through the sharing of information, research and personal experiences.

Websites

Australian

Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented - <http://www.aegt.net.au/>

ACT Gifted and Talented Local Support Group - <http://actgifted.net.au/actgt/>

Gifted Families Support Group - <http://www.gfsg.org.au/>

Gifted Education Research Resource & Information Centre - <https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/gerric/>

Learning Difficulties Coalition NSW Inc - <http://www ldc.org.au/>

NSW Department of Education and Communities - <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/>

International

Council for Exceptional Children - <http://www.cec.sped.org/>

European Council for High Ability - <http://www.echa.info/>

Dr. François Gagné - <http://gagnefrancoys.wix.com/dmgt-mddt>
Gifted Development Centre - <https://www.gifteddevelopment.com/>
National Association for Gifted Children - <http://www.nagc.org/>
National Centre for Learning Difficulties - <http://www.nclld.org/>
Stephanie T Nolan, Is it a Cheetah - http://www.stephanietolan.com/is_it_a_cheetah.htm
Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted - <https://www.sengifted.org/>
The 2e Education Blog - <http://twiceexceptional.com/about/>
Uniquely Gifted - <http://www.uniquelygifted.org/>
World Council for Gifted and Talented Children - <http://www.world-gifted.org/>

Books

Baum, S., Owen, S. V. & Dixon, J. (1991). *To be gifted and learning disabled: From identification to practical intervention strategies*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Publishers.

Colangelo, N. & Davis, G. A. (Eds)(1991). *Handbook of gifted education*. US: Allyn & Bacon.

Galbraith, Judy. (1983). *The gifted kids survival guide*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow Education.

Galbraith, Judy. (2000). *You know your child is gifted when: A beginners guide to life on the bright side*. US: Free Spirit Publishing.

George, D. (2011). *Young, Gifted and Bored, The independent thinking series*. United Kingdom: Crown House Publishing Limited.

Golon, A. S. (2004). *Raising topsy-turvy kids: Successfully parenting your visual spatial child*. Colorado: DeElon Publishing.

Kay, K., Robson, D. & Brennehan, J. F.(Eds) (2007). *High IQ kids: Collected insights, information and personal stories from the experts*. US: Free Spirit Publishing.

Kim, K. H, Kaufman, J. C, Baer J. & Sriraman, B. (Eds) (2013). *Creatively Gifted Students are not like Other Gifted Students: Research, Theory and Practice*. The Netherlands: Sense Publishers

Kurcinka, M. S. (1998). *Raising your spirited child: A guide for parents whose child is more intensive, sensitive, perceptive, persistent, energetic*. US: Harper Collins Publishers.

Mares, Louise. (1993). *Adolescence and giftedness*. Melbourne: Hawker Brownlow.

Morelock, M. J. (1992). *Giftedness: The view from within. Understanding Our Gifted*. Open Space Communications Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 1, 11-15.

Neihart, M., Reis, S. M., Robinson, N. M.& Moon, S. M. (2002). *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* Texas: Prufrock Press Inc.

Oyesigye, R. S. (2011). *Teaching the Gifted and Talented Learners*. United Kingdom: Lambert Academy Publications.

Peichowski, M.M. (2006). *Mellow out they say if only they could: Intensities and sensitivities of the young and bright*. Wisconsin: Yunasa Books.

Silverman, L.K. (2013). *Giftedness 101*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Stopper, M.J. (2012). *Meeting the Social and Emotional Needs of Gifted and Talented Children*. Oxfordshire: Routledge Publications.

Sutherland, M. (2012). *Gifted and Talented in the Early Years, Practical Activities for Children Aged 3 to 6*. London: Sage Publications.

Walker, S. Y. (1991). *The survival guide for parents of gifted kids: How to understand, live with and stick up for your gifted child*. US: Free Spirit Publishing.