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Supporting your gifted and talented child's achievement and well-being: A resource for parents

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Foreword

As the mother of two (now adult) identified gifted learners, I am honoured to have been asked to write the foreword for *Supporting your gifted and talented child's achievement and well-being: A resource for parents*, co-authored by Janet Farrall and Lesley Henderson.

My eldest daughter's journey through the education system was compromised as a result of a complete lack of knowledge of 'gifted' and its associated implications. Not only was there a lack of knowledge on my behalf but also a complete failure by the system to appropriately identify her needs and provide the necessary curriculum modifications and supports. She rapidly became disengaged, disinterested and a classic example of a gifted underachiever.

We knew that there was something not quite right but our ability to remediate the situation was almost nil as we had no idea what was wrong or where to search for answers. There was no support from the school; platitudes and excuses came thick and fast. Finally after years of looking and reading and asking questions of ANYONE I could find, I came to realise that she might be gifted. She was not formally identified until her second year of a university degree, at which time she was still a textbook example of a gifted underachiever. Eventually she was able to re-engage and in time passed her degree. Happily she is now living a fulfilled and fruitful life as a practitioner in her chosen profession. She has undertaken post graduate studies and received a Dean's Merit for her efforts.

When our second child was born and, almost at birth, began to display the same signs of what we now understand to be giftedness, we made a promise that we would do WHATEVER it took to make sure that she had the support, understanding and assistance required for her to take best advantage of her gifts and enjoy the ride at the same time. There were times during her childhood and educational journey where keeping this promise was quite easy and other times where we did need to be 'the parents from hell' to ensure that her needs were catered for. However, all in all, it has meant that she has thrived and prospered and gone from strength to strength. Let's not kid ourselves: it has not all been beer and skittles but no journey that involves raising a child is.

If only this book had been available to me in 1990 - how much heartache and angst might it have saved? My eldest daughter still has issues which may have been able to have been avoided or mitigated had she received the appropriate learning support in her formative years at school.

Every parent's experience of raising a gifted child will be different. Navigating the 'gifted journey' can sometimes be akin to a walk through a mine field! This book provides a safe path on which to tread – albeit sometimes tentatively. **Fear not!** In 1597 Francis Bacon stated that "*knowledge itself is power*" and as you read this book, it will empower you with the knowledge you need to embark on the gifted journey with your child.

This book is like a breath of fresh air – nourishment for the soul. The information is presented clearly and concisely and is refreshingly jargon free. The chapter headings are comprehensive and very user-friendly, especially for stressed parents who are looking for information which they can relate to, followed by answers they need.

This however is no lightweight publication – more like a well-stocked one stop shop. Life for most people is becoming busier by the day and many parents simply do not have time to trawl the internet seeking information. This book can and does provide so many answers and there is no question regarding the authenticity of the information. It focuses not only on those children who reside in an urban environment but also offers suggestions for those who are (as my children were) geographically isolated.

Without hesitation, I have much pleasure in recommending this book to anyone who wishes to seek out information about giftedness so that they can understand and make informed decisions about their children's developmental needs.

Mary Killeen
28/11/14

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Introduction to the book

Parenting a gifted child can bring both joys and challenges. Whilst it can be a relief to know there is an explanation for your child's behaviours, it can also be daunting to envisage the way forward. Networking with other parents of gifted children can be helpful, as they understand what it means to have a gifted child. It is heartening to be able to talk freely about giftedness, and to feel supported. As Annemarie Roeper (1986) advised:

We need to remember that no matter how overwhelmed we might be with the fact that we have a gifted child, we have needs, too; we must not forget ourselves and our own needs, and we must also realize that these needs are separate from those of the child.

Our advice for parents of gifted and talented children is to seek out information about giftedness so that they can understand and make informed decisions about their children's developmental needs. The information in this booklet can be used as a starting point for parents and as a resource for educators and other professionals who wish to understand the complexities of parenting and working with gifted children.

The contents are organised around four key chapters. The introduction to each chapter gives a brief overview informed by contemporary research and literature. In our experience, parents frequently ask questions relating to the education and well-being of their gifted children, which we have captured over time in the context of our professional and volunteer work. In responding to these questions, we have formulated answers that are not intended to be definitive, but which provide essential information with many resources for further reading.

The Gifted and Talented Children's Association of South Australia (GTCASA) has acted as an advocate for gifted education since its establishment in 1975. A significant contribution to the community has been GTCASA's support of parents in raising and educating their gifted children. A group of Committee members in 2007 compiled a resource for parents with answers to frequently asked questions. The work of Janet Farrall, Ann Matison, Mary Minchin and Wendy Stewart resulted in the publication of *Raising your gifted and talented child: The joys and the challenges*. This current publication acknowledges their foundational work and significantly expands upon their original concept to present a revised, accessible and clear reference for parents of gifted children.

We welcome feedback. Any suggestions for further questions and suitable resources can ensure that the publication remains current and relevant.

Janet and Lesley

CHAPTER 1: The meaning of giftedness and talent

Introduction

Over the years many definitions and views have been put forward as to who are the gifted and what constitutes giftedness. While there is no single, agreed-upon definition in the gifted education literature, it is apparent that there are some children whose abilities are in advance of their age peers. These children are gifted. They may be gifted physically, musically, intellectually, socially or linguistically. In other words, they demonstrate advanced abilities and interest in one or more areas of learning. When those abilities are developed and demonstrated to a high level of excellence, then that child would be considered to be talented. So the terms *gifted* and *talented* are often used together to include both the individuals who have natural aptitudes or undeveloped potential, as well as those whose abilities have been developed and who are performing at a high level in their area of strength. **In this publication, we focus upon intellectually gifted students.** These are the students with high cognitive ability, who may or may not be performing academically at an optimal level.

Intellectual giftedness

If parents identify a child's aptitude for music, their natural response would be to take them for lessons, provide musical instruments and experiences. Similarly for physical abilities, parents would facilitate their child's interest in and aptitude for sports by taking them to a sports club, where they would receive expert coaching and encouragement and the opportunity to play with similarly able peers. Gifted musicians and athletes progress at their own rate, regardless of age, but based on progress and demonstrated abilities. But when it comes to a child's intellectual advancement, it seems that this is the type of giftedness that parents find most challenging to manage, particularly when it comes to finding schools and teachers who are able to recognise, value and educate for giftedness.

Intellectual giftedness has several important implications:

1. Gifted children are not all the same. Although there are some characteristics that the research suggests are indicators of giftedness (for example, see Webb, Gore, Amend & DeVries, 2007) not all children will demonstrate all gifted behaviours, in all contexts, at all times. There are a range of different types and degrees of giftedness.
2. Giftedness is a developmental concept (Gagné, 2008a). Once a child is identified as being gifted, it is no guarantee of academic or life success. It is an indication only of a child's potential for growth and achievement. It alerts parents and teachers to the imperative of finding provisions and services that meet their needs.
3. Gifted children have special educational needs (Collins, 2001). Their degree of difference from the norm requires qualitatively different provisions and services to match their ease and speed of learning, and their complexity of understanding. The wider the gap between the gifted child's abilities and their age-based educational provisions, the more apparent their special educational needs become.

4. Giftedness is both a blessing and a burden for children – they have the capacity for ease and speed of learning, but they will not always enjoy being different from their age peers, especially if their giftedness is not valued and they are made to feel different, or are bored and unchallenged in their learning (Galbraith & Delisle, 2011). For parents there is the joy of their gifted child's capacity for creativity, insights and understandings that both enrich and astound, but there are certainly some challenges in terms of keeping up with their learning and finding appropriate environments where they can grow and be happy.

It is important to remember that giftedness is an “ordinary difference” (Geake, 2001 in Collins p.32), just as some children are taller or shorter than their age peers, or have different interests and personalities. Giftedness does not bestow any sense of superiority or enhanced value on the child who is identified as gifted. All children are to be equally valued and appreciated for their unique natures. Gifted children are children, just like any other child, with children's needs. Giftedness adds layers of complexities to their development that require some different understandings and provisions in order to ensure that their development is positive and their educational outcomes are fulfilling.

Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent

Gagné's (2008) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Diagram 1) has been adopted by most Australian States in their policies for gifted students, and is featured in the Australian Curriculum. It has several elements that are attractive to educators and parents alike. Gagné makes a clear distinction between giftedness and talent. Giftedness, according to Gagné, is the possession of natural abilities or aptitudes at levels significantly beyond what might be expected for one's age in any domain of human ability. As demonstrated in Diagram 1, these natural abilities include several domains, for example, Intellectual and Creative. Gagné defines talent as achievement or performance at a level significantly beyond what might be expected at a given age and is usually the result of systematically developed skills. Giftedness then, can be viewed as potential whereas talent can be viewed as performance. It follows from this distinction that a child may be gifted and not talented and this may explain under-achievement in gifted students. It also follows that if we find a student with outstanding talent in one or more fields, that talent is being driven by a gift in one or more domains of human endeavour.

Another attractive feature of Gagné's model lies in the importance he places upon catalysts in the transformation of giftedness into talent. The Environmental catalyst values the role of parents, teachers and significant others in the developmental process. The Intrapersonal catalyst values the personal and mental qualities of gifted individuals and their capacity to change, grow and develop their potentialities. The Chance catalyst acknowledges the role that luck or chance can play in the development of talent. Gagné estimates that 10% of students may be gifted, an estimation that is more inclusive than some other definitions of giftedness. Within this range it should be recognised that there are different levels of giftedness, ranging from mildly gifted to profoundly gifted (Gross, 2004c).

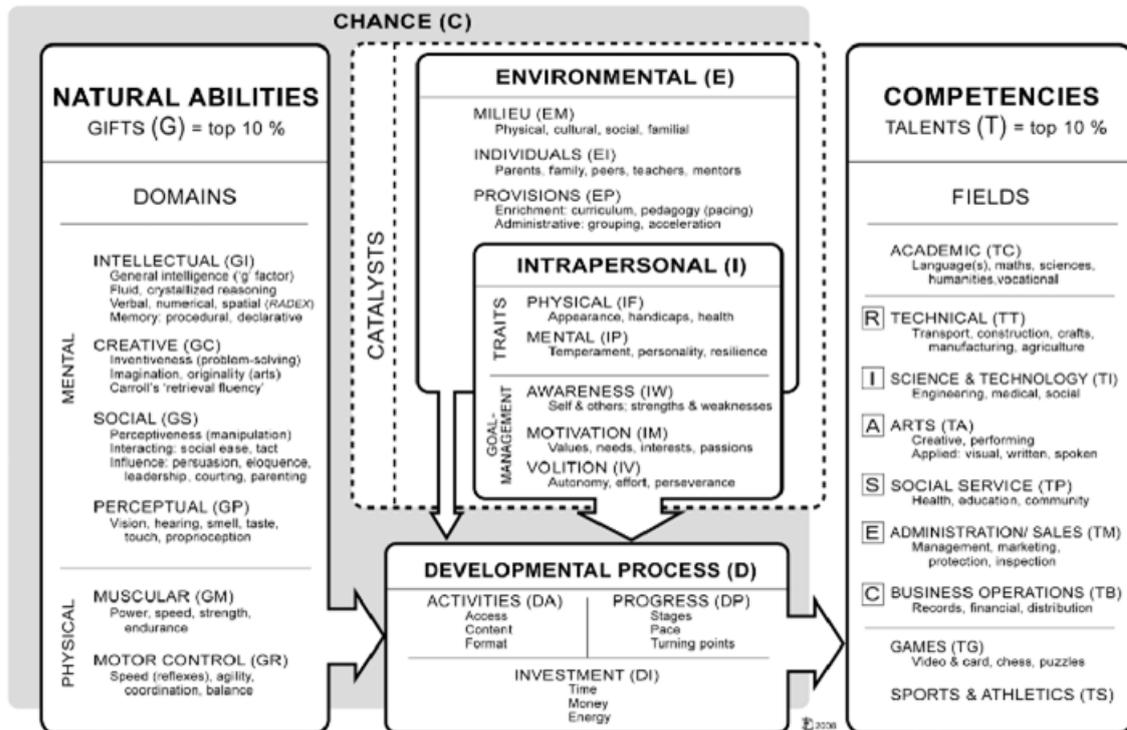


Diagram 1: Gagné's (2008) *Developmental Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT)*

Gifted behaviour can be displayed in one or more areas of human performance. It can be displayed in an academic area such as mathematics, science or language arts. For example, a five year old may be capable of working at a twelve year old level in mathematics or be reading material at a ten year old level. Gifted behaviour can also be displayed in a visual or performing arts area such as music, drama, art, craft or dance. For example, a high school student may show outstanding ability in playing the violin and take part in concert performances with an orchestra, or display a high degree of sophistication in wood carving or oil painting. Gifted behaviour can also be displayed in a socially valued area such as leadership or communication skills or in the areas of sport or mechanical skills.

Creativity - the capacity to come up with original solutions and ideas - is a factor that can be observed in all aspects of human performance: the creative writer, the creative musician, the designer of cars, the inventor and so on.

Individuals of all ages can display gifted behaviour in one particular area or in a number of areas.

Further reading:

Collins, J. (Chair, Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee). (2001) *The education of gifted children*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

http://www.apf.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_Employment_and_Workplace_Relations/Completed_inquiries/1999-02/gifted/report/contents

- Gagné, F. (2008b). *Building gifts into talents: Brief overview of the DMGT 2.0*.
http://nswagtc.org.au/images/stories/infocentre/dmgt_2.0_en_overview.pdf
- Galbraith, J. & Delisle, J. (2011). *The gifted teen survival guide* (4th ed.). Minneapolis, MB: Free Spirit Publishing.
- Gross, M. (Ed.) (2004c). *Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for teachers: Module1: Understanding Giftedness: Core, Extension and Specialisation sections*. Sydney, NSW: Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC). Retrieved from
<https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/gerric/resources/pd-package/>
- Webb, J., Gore, J., Amend, E., & DeVries, A. (2007). *A parent's guide to gifted children*. Tucson, AZ: Great Potential Press - See more at:
<http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/my-child-gifted/common-characteristics-gifted-individuals#sthash.i2mvps5h.dpuf>

Questions parents ask

How do I know if my child is gifted and talented?

Children with hidden or demonstrated gifts come from varying social and cultural backgrounds, have their own characteristics and personalities and come in all shapes and sizes.

Educators have described children's behaviour that can indicate outstanding ability, perseverance and creativity. Behaviour indicating giftedness in your child can include all or some the following, although this list is not exclusive:

- learning quickly and easily
- thinking of several solutions to a given problem
- possessing an exceptional memory
- developing friendships with older children
- pursuing an interest or hobby intensively for a time; for example, your child might *live, eat* and *think* dinosaurs for months
- absorbing large amounts of information quickly and having the ability to recall this information
- asking a great number of relevant questions and expecting answers
- showing a fertile imagination
- working out complicated mathematics orally, rather than on paper
- showing outstanding curiosity, initiative or insight
- having a large vocabulary and using words effectively
- reading from an early age
- showing a keen sense of humour.

Behaviour which may be more challenging for the teacher, but can also indicate giftedness, includes the following:

- becoming bored easily
- avoiding monotonous, repetitive written tasks
- being naughty or irrepressible in class
- being the *class clown*
- being inattentive in class while absorbed in a private world

- being unwilling to undertake tasks seen as irrelevant
- having *smart* answers to questions
- refusing to conform.

However, we would like to stress that the above descriptions are indicators only and no one behaviour or characteristic can be used to detect giftedness. For example, not all children who are *naughty* are displaying gifted behaviour and in fact, many of the examples above can be common to many children.

You may need to seek advice as to what further opportunities need to be provided, both at home and at school, so that your child's specific giftedness and talent can be fostered to their full extent. Advice can be sought from teachers and professional advisers in the school system and those people with expertise within the community such as sports coaches, music tutors, mathematics coaches, artists and dance instructors.

Further Reading:

Appendix A

You may also be interested to follow the resources and information on the NAGC website at <http://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/my-child-gifted>

Do children display gifted behaviour all the time?

There are some who believe that a gifted child will be gifted in everything, and this sets unrealistic expectations on the child to perform well all the time in all things they do. While there are some globally gifted children, it is more likely that a child will be gifted in a particular subject area. But even then, no one is exceptionally outstanding all the time and it is quite normal, for example, for a child who is gifted in mathematics to make occasional mistakes in that area, or to display average or even below average abilities in other areas such as reading, or in simple activities such as tying up shoelaces.

All children, including those who are gifted and talented, also need the opportunity to daydream, to experiment, to play with older and younger children and to mix with individuals of all ages, in other words, to be children.

Is the use of intelligence tests the only way to establish if my child is gifted and talented?

Intelligence tests can provide specific information on your child's abilities in relation to age peers. These restricted tests are only administered by registered psychologists and include information about thinking, reasoning, numerical and verbal abilities. There are individual and group intelligence tests and while the overall score will give a guide to your child's ability, knowledge of what is actually achieved in each of the areas tested will probably be of more use to you and your child's teacher. It should be noted that intelligence testing of children under the age of 4 years is not recommended.

While the results of intelligence tests can provide valuable indicators of your child's intellectual performance, they have certain disadvantages, which include the following:

- cultural and linguistic differences that can distort the test results
- inability to identify the child who responds with creative or divergent answers

- impersonal test conditions that do not take into account the emotional state of the child.

Intelligence tests are not the only way to establish if your child is gifted and talented. Types of giftedness such as giftedness in the visual and performing arts, require domain-specific identification measures to determine giftedness. There are a number of ways in which professional educators can identify gifted behaviour including the factors of aptitude, perseverance and creativity. The range includes:

- teacher checklist
- peer assessment
- parent checklist
- student self-assessment where a student indicates that they have the ability and interest to take part in a specific learning task
- samples of children's work: models, writing, paintings, inventions, mathematics, science and so on
- participation in competitions, debates, and problem solving activities
- school records of academic achievement
- observations of behaviour made during the child's participation in a wide range of activities
- auditions or interviews.

A combination of these procedures can be used to identify gifted characteristics and behaviours.

Further Reading:

Merrick, C. & Targett, R. (Eds.) (2004). Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for teachers: Module 2: Identification of Gifted Students: Core, Extension and Specialisation sections. Sydney, NSW: Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC). Retrieved from <https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/gerric/resources/pd-package/>

At what stages of development should my child be assessed for giftedness?

Finding out whether your child is gifted and talented should be a continuing process because your child's interests, needs and behaviour may change. Also, your child's growth and development may be uneven over time so continual monitoring and recording of behaviour is required to check needs and interests and to provide related experiences. This is of course true for all children.

Your child cannot demonstrate giftedness in a particular area without having experience in it. For example, your child needs to experience playing the guitar to show potential for outstanding performance in that field. This exposure is likely to occur at different times in a child's life so it is important to be continually aware of how your child is reacting to new as well as continuing activities. Hidden gifts and talents cannot be displayed unless a child has time to persevere with appropriate activities. You may be alarmed when your child wants to spend what you judge to be excessive time pursuing a particular interest. The development of giftedness and talent, however, can be frustrated by rigid rules about how your child is to use their time. There is a need for flexibility in the use of time to accommodate interests and encourage perseverance.

Exceptional giftedness and talent in your child will ordinarily be readily recognised through advanced performance and perseverance in an area of particular interest. As a general rule, the earlier that your child is identified, the better. However, the validity of psychometric assessment before the age of 4 can be questioned.

Is it possible for a child to be gifted and also have a disability?

Evidence indicates that two sub-populations of gifted students still require a more thorough understanding. It is possible for a child with an IQ in the gifted range to also have a specific learning disability such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia or several other conditions. The characteristics of the Gifted and Learning Disabled (GLD) student, or the gifted student with ADHD, generally mean that the student will display subject-specific weaknesses, subject-specific strengths and often display poor organisational or time-management skills. Some students from these two populations may have academic weakness across the curriculum and demonstrate their ability with higher order thinking skills purely in an oral form.

Sometimes a GLD student will be identified because of recognised gifted characteristics whilst at other times identification is because the characteristics of a specific learning disability such as dyslexia or dysgraphia have been identified. Some students are never identified as gifted, or having a specific learning disability, and are regarded as *average* by their teachers. Knowledge regarding identification, characteristics and appropriate teaching methodology is vital if the GLD student or the gifted student with ADHD is to reach their true potential. Teaching which fosters success and builds upon strengths, is essential, as lack of success in school subjects links directly and negatively to motivation, self-image and perceptions of self-efficacy as a learner.

Further reading:

Wormald, C. & Vialle, W. (Eds.) (2011). *Dual exceptionality*. Woollongong, NSW: AAEGT.
Retrieved from http://www.aaegt.net.au/?page_id=953

Baum, S.M., Owen, S.V., & Dixon, J. (1991). *To be Gifted & Learning Disabled*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press

Newman, T.A., & Sternberg, R.J. (2004). *Students with both Gifts and Disabilities*, Plenum Publishers.

Is creativity related to giftedness?

Many researchers have explored the links between giftedness and creativity, and while there is no *clear* relationship, there are some strong indications that both are connected. One of the problems is in measurement, for highly creative individuals may not necessarily perform well on any standardised IQ test or scale for giftedness (Porter, 2005). They may find tests boring or restrictive and play with the questions instead of giving the one right answer required. One can be gifted without necessarily being particularly creative (think of the mathematically gifted individual who works at a very high level of expertise) but the highly creative mathematician who develops new formulae must also be highly gifted. Tannenbaum (1997) would refer to the former as a gifted *performer* and the latter as a gifted *producer*, and Renzulli (1986) referred to schoolhouse giftedness and creative-productive giftedness to distinguish between the two different types of giftedness.

Creativity refers to the ability to have many (sometimes quite original) ideas, to think flexibly or to be able to combine what already exists into something new: an idea or a product, such as a piece of music or poetry or a new procedure for carrying out a task, such as heating the home or designing a new car.

Your child may display creativity by offering many ideas on one topic, offering several solutions to a problem, coming up with unique or unusual ideas, creating fantasies, pretending, using imagination and taking risks. Another way of assessing creativity is to observe your child's behaviour in everyday situations such as at play, or in tackling problems, as well as observing reactions to questions and learning tasks that can be approached in a variety of ways. Little 'c' creativity can be demonstrated in any number of everyday actions whereas big 'C' creativity is found in the high-level innovators who have mastered the knowledge and skills of the discipline and shifted boundaries. Children are to be encouraged and nurtured to develop both their creative thinking abilities as they learn the knowledge and skills of a discipline, for it is in the areas where they have knowledge and interest that they are more likely to be creative.

E. Paul Torrance, an influential figure in the field of creativity research and the founder of the International Future Problem Solving Program, acknowledged the importance of developing creative and innovative thinkers. His advice (2002) to gifted and creative students, who he referred to as *Beyonders* was:

Don't be afraid to fall in love with something and pursue it with intensity. Know, understand, take pride in, practise, develop, use, exploit and enjoy your greatest strengths. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they impose on you. Free yourself to play your own game. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you. Don't waste energy trying to be well-rounded. Do what you love and can do well. Learn the skills of interdependence. (p.10-11)

Further reading:

Amabile, T. (1989). *Growing up creative: Nurturing a lifetime of creativity*. Buffalo, NY: Creative Education Foundation Press.

Hoagies Page has a number of articles and resources:

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/creatively_gifted.htm

Porter, L. (2005). *Young gifted children* (2nd ed.) Crow's Nest, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Tannenbaum, A. J. (1997). *The meaning and making of giftedness*. In N. Colangelo & G. A. Davis (Eds.). *Handbook of Gifted Education*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Torrance, E.P. (2002). *The Manifesto: A guide to developing a creative career*. Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing.

CHAPTER 2: Responding to the social and emotional needs of gifted children

Introduction

Most parents would agree that the social, emotional and physical development of children is as important as intellectual development. However, there is a risk of expecting more mature behaviour from the child who displays outstanding intellectual ability. They could be deeply interested, beyond their years in problems such as politics, religion, war and environmental pollution but could be socially, emotionally and physically still a child. For example, a five year old who demonstrates reasoning ability well beyond that age can burst into tears at the sight of a terrifying monster on television. Silverman (1993) referred to this as asynchronous development, and warned that giftedness is sometimes accompanied by emotional intensity and sensitivity, which may make these children vulnerable to emotional or social issues. She advised that:

To the uninformed, giftedness may seem a sort of special privilege, but to the gifted individual, often it feels like a distinct disadvantage. It is painful to be different in a society that derides differences. Pain may also come from internal sources – from a finely tuned psychological structure that experiences all of life more intensely. Giftedness has an emotional as well as a cognitive substructure: gifted complexity gives rise to emotional depth. Thus, gifted children not only *think* differently from their peers, they also *feel* differently (p.3).

Different views of the affective adjustment of gifted children emerge from the literature: some researchers describe a very robust picture of the gifted child's affective development (for example Clark, 2007) while others (like Silverman, 1993 and Neville, Piechowski & Tolan, 2013) highlight the potential for vulnerability. What seems to be an essential factor in the positive well-being for all children is a nurturing environment.

Children need to know they have the support and confidence of their parents and that there are some problems or issues that can only be dealt with by adults. Your child's self-esteem is an important factor in being able to cope with the differences between intellectual development and other areas of growth. Development of self-esteem is not just a matter of intellect; it is built on valuing self, on being accepted as an individual and on being able to relate well with others. Much social, emotional, physical and intellectual learning can take place through play. It can be a means of trying out new roles, relieving tensions, overcoming conflicts and providing for self-expression. Through play, your child can explore, experiment and test ideas. Also, mixing with individuals of similar abilities and interests, in appropriate clubs, camps or out of school activities, can help with your child's social development.

The questions that parents ask frequently about their gifted children relate to often complex social and emotional issues, so the information provided here is not in any way trying to make these heart-felt issues seem simple or easy to resolve. It may be advisable to consult a professional who understands the social and emotional needs of gifted children.

Further reading:

- Clark, B. (2008). *Growing up gifted*. (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Daniels, S., & Piechowski, M. (2009). *Living with intensity*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Delisle, J. (2006). *Parenting gifted kids: Tips for raising happy and successful children*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
- Neville, C., Piechowski, M. & Tolan, S. (2013). *Off the charts: Asynchrony and the gifted child*. Unionville, NY: Royal Fireworks Publishing.
- Silverman, L.K. (1993). *Counseling the gifted*. Denver, CO: Love Publishing.

Questions parents ask

How can I help my child to accept the fact that they are different?

We need to understand that all individuals are different, with different abilities, interests, needs, strengths and weaknesses. Children develop attitudes from the people around them: parents, teachers, other adults and children. In a family situation, encouraging individuality and discussing differences between individuals in positive ways helps gifted children to accept that giftedness is an ordinary difference. Differences between people can be highlighted by reading stories with your child, and viewing motion pictures that address difference. Discussing how the characters in these stories manage being different and the helpful attitudes and strategies they demonstrate can assist your child's social and emotional adjustment. Lists of books and motion pictures portraying gifted characters can be found on the Hoagies' website at http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/reading_lists/htm and <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/movies.htm>.

An interesting option is to have discussions about how particular groups function although their membership is made up of a number of individuals, and how people belong to a number of groups based on such things as family, clubs, friends and school. Groups can be enriched by the diversity of their members, and gifted children can see that everyone can have something to contribute that is of value to the group.

It is also important to consider your child's self-esteem and self-confidence. It is probably socially important that they accept the view that "It's all right to be different and everybody is different". They also need to know that you love them for who they are, not for what they can do.

Sometimes people get caught up with a child's achievements rather than the child's individuality. All children need social acceptance in the family and among their friends. Brothers and sisters need to feel proud of what each can do and it is not helpful to make comparisons. Your child will be best supported when respect for all is a family value. It is important that your family life acknowledges, encourages and enjoys the development of your child's giftedness and talents. Criticism and ridicule are rarely effective. Children need to hear and feel that they can contribute to the family.

Is it possible that my child is depressed?

The incidence of depression in gifted children is no greater than that of the general population of children (Neihart, 2002) so do not assume depression straight away. Adolescents, for example, may be demonstrating normal teenage confusion and angst. However, because gifted children can think more deeply, and may be highly sensitive to the world around them, it is possible that they may experience particular kinds of depression: feeling unable to live up to impossibly high expectations of themselves and others, feelings of being alienated and cut off from other people and existential depression (Webb, Meckstroth & Tolan, 1991). The latter “is a state of mind that arises from one’s ability to contemplate issues about existence, while feeling impotent to effect change of any consequence” (Delisle, 2006, p.120). This type of depression is more usually experienced by thoughtful adults rather than by children.

Delisle (2006, p. 123) advised that “your presence along the way may not eliminate existential depression entirely, but it will put it into its proper perspective.” Advice to parents and how they might manage their child’s depression include:

- being proactive, if the *sad* mood seems prolonged
- resisting the urge to reason the child out of their depression
- listening attentively and seeking to understand their concerns without minimising or dismissing them or trying to offer easy solutions
- accepting and acknowledging that their feelings are real
- affirming that they are entitled to their feelings but establishing that you do not share their view
- maintaining open communication and presence.

Prolonged episodes of depression may require professional help.

Further Reading:

Webb, J.T. (n.d.). Existential depression in gifted individuals. Retrieved from

<https://sengifted.org/archives/articles/existential-depression-in-gifted-individual>

Webb, J.T. (2008). Dabrowski’s Theory and Existential Depression in Gifted Children and Adults. Presented at *The Eighth International Congress of the Institute for Positive Disintegration in Human Development, August 7, 2008, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.*

Retrieved from

http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/dabrowskis_theory_existential_depression_feb09.pdf

How can I help my child who feels lonely and isolated?

Both you and your child need to be aware that all individuals experience loneliness and isolation to some extent, at some time in their lives. The development of your child's self-confidence is again of vital importance in this situation and children need to feel comfortable with themselves.

Your child needs to be encouraged to mix with children and adults of similar interests by joining appropriate clubs and participating in activities inside and outside school. In remote and isolated areas, communication with others through electronic means could be encouraged. It is also important to be aware that children sometimes prefer to pursue a learning experience on their own and enjoy their own company, and indeed,

may prefer their own company. There is evidence that suggests that highly gifted children are more likely to be introverted rather than extroverted.

You might like to consider the concept of *oneliness* as a positive way of thinking about being alone without being lonely. Anderson (2014) defined this as

- a sense of personal contentment, well-being or satisfaction found when one is finally alone
- the enjoyment of self when one is free of the needs and demands of others.

This attitude can be self-affirming and stave off feelings of loneliness that can be a negative influence.

Further reading:

Anderson, J.S. (2014). *Oneliness*. Retrieved from

<http://www.jsandersonauthor.com/oneliness/#.U8XYAazO0f4>

How do gifted children form friendships?

Research by Miraca Gross (2004b) found that for gifted children, chronological age is not as important as mental age when choosing friends. She also found that “Gifted children begin to look for friends with whom they can develop close and trusting relationships, at ages when their age-peers of average ability are looking for play partners.” The stages that all children go through in forming friendships are

- Stage 1 - Play Partner in the early childhood years
- Stage 2 - People to chat to, about age 7-9
- Stage 3 - Help and encouragement, about age 9-11
- Stage 4 - Intimacy/empathy, about age 11 or 12
- Stage 5 - The sure shelter: “A faithful friend is a sure shelter: whoever finds one has found a rare treasure” (Ecclesiasticus, 6:14).

Gifted children who have found their *faithful friend* earlier than others can be devastated when they are separated and their grief can follow the pattern of bereavement that requires sensitive understanding and possibly professional counselling.

Further reading:

Gross, M. (2004a). *Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for Teachers: Module 3: Social Emotional Development of Gifted Students*. Sydney, NSW: Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC).

Retrieved from <https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/gerric/resources/pd-package/>

Gross, M. (2004b). Gifted Students and the search for friendship. *Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for Teachers: Module 3: Extension Module, Part 1* (pp. 10-19). Sydney, NSW: Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC).

How do I encourage self-efficacy in my child?

Henry Ford once observed: “Whether you think you can or you can’t, you are usually right.” An individual’s level of self-efficacy (confidence or self-belief) towards a given task will determine how likely they are to attempt something, how much effort they put

into the task and how resilient they will be in the face of failure. Those gifted students who may be afraid that they will not live up to the expectations of others are likely to give up quickly when difficulties arise. As a result they are likely not to be identified as gifted if this becomes habituated behaviour (Chaffey, 2004b, p.7).

Parents can help their gifted sons and daughters develop high self-efficacy by:

- being a positive role model
- helping children to set realistic and achievable goals
- giving appropriate feedback that matches the deed
- giving praise for effort as well as the product
- avoiding rescuing children when they experience minor set-backs. Ironically, constant rescuing leads children to believe that they have to be helped because they can't cope. This results in poor mastery of skills, low self-esteem and low self-efficacy.

Further reading:

Chaffey, G. (2004). *Gifted and Talented Education Professional Development Package for Teachers: Module Four: Understanding Underachievement in Gifted Students*. Sydney, NSW: Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC). Retrieved from <https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/gerric/resources/pd-package/>

- Core Module pp 7-8, 18
- Extension Module, Academic Self-Efficacy, pp 10-20
- Specialisation Module 4, pp 29-34

Martin, A. (2003). *How to Motivate Your Child*. Sydney, Australia: Bantam Books.

Seligman, M. (2007). *The optimistic child*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin. (This book refers to all children and has useful insights into developing resilience and optimism.)

How do I manage a child with perfectionism?

Schuler's (2002) research found that:

- as a group, gifted students tend to be perfectionistic
- they are rather more perfectionistic than students of average ability
- their perfectionism can be a powerful force for high achievement.

Gross (2004) suggested that perfectionism can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand it can act as an enabling force in a gifted student's drive for excellence. On the other hand it can act as a disabling force that stunts the gifted student's capacity to achieve their potential. Gifted perfectionists may be unwilling to try or learn anything new for fear of failure.

Parents and children need to understand that gifted individuals are not expected to be faultless. Mistakes should be viewed as opportunities for learning. One way parents can help children to understand this is to model learning from mistakes themselves. Many innovations in science and technology have come about as a result of mistakes that have been embraced. There are many examples of eminent people who made mistakes and overcame failure to achieve at a high level. Their experiences of how they overcame challenges can help a gifted child understand that failure and taking risks with their learning are necessary for intellectual growth.

Further reading:

Chaffey, G. (2004a). Core Module 4, pp 8-9, 20

Gross, M. (2004). Module Three, Extension, pp 21-25

Martin, A. (2003). *How to Motivate Your Child*. Australia: Bantam Books.

Silverman, L. (1999). *Perfectionism: The crucible of giftedness*.

<http://nmgifted.org/GAC%20Resources/Perfectionism%20The%20Crucible%20of%20Giftedness-SILVERMAN.pdf>

How do I encourage my child to have a growth mindset?

Professor Carol Dweck (2000), in her ground-breaking study on Mindsets, postulated that an individual's view of intelligence determines whether they have a fixed (entity) or growth (malleable) mindset. Students who believe that their intelligence is a fixed trait and who are praised for their intelligence rather than their effort will be intent upon looking smart at all costs. They will pursue performance goals and seek out learning tasks that enable them to achieve without making an effort. Over time, this pattern of behaviour could result in serious underachievement. Dweck observes that our efforts to encourage gifted girls in Mathematics and Science, for example, have made them especially vulnerable to developing a fixed mindset that may inhibit the development of their potential.

On the other hand, students who believe that intelligence can be improved by learning will develop a growth mindset. These students pursue learning goals and seek out learning tasks that will challenge them and enable them to grow. They will accept constructive advice about how to improve their work and see mistakes as opportunities to learn. It is hardly surprising that over time, students with a growth mindset are likely to realise their potential.

Parents can help their child acquire a growth mindset by praising effort rather than intelligence. They will allow their child to make mistakes and learn from them and they will encourage reasonable struggle and persistence in reaching learning goals. They will not blame others, for example, the teacher or the child's peers, so that their child accepts responsibility for their learning and develops academic resilience.

Further reading:

Centre for Confidence and Well-being (n.d.). Mindset tips for parents of under 5's.

Retrieved from <http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/projects.php?p=cG1kPTI5NQ>

Dweck, C. (2000). *Self Theories: Their role in motivation, personality and development*, New York: Psychology Press.

Dweck, C. (2007). The Perils and Promise of Praise. *Educational Leadership*, 65(2).

There are also many clips on You-Tube that explain the concept of mindsets.

Is it reasonable to have high expectations of my gifted child?

It makes sense that parents and teachers tend to set high academic expectations for gifted children and encourage them to achieve their best. Inadvertently, they may be putting unreasonable pressure on the gifted child who tries to meet adults' expectations which may not necessarily match their own interests and needs. It is important that parents talk with their gifted children about setting appropriate learning goals and support them to achieve these. Goals need to be SMART – that is, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely in order to bring out the best in people (Neihart, 2008). Trying to live up to unrealistic high expectations can generate a fear of *failing* and a reluctance to take risks with their learning.

Further reading:

Neihart, M. (2008). *Peak performance for smart kids: Strategies and tips for ensuring school success*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

CHAPTER 3: The home and community

Introduction

Parenting a gifted child brings with it both joys and challenges. Parents are their child's first teachers and continue to be an important influence on their child's development and achievement, even as peers grow in influence. As Matthews and Foster (2009) so eloquently stated:

Parents can strengthen a child's learning spirit and help sustain her drive to mastery by respecting her choices, nurturing her independence, and allowing that sometimes the most valuable learning of all is what happens serendipitously through the many experiences of daily life with friends, neighbours, classmates, and family members (p. 288).

Sometimes parents express concerns that they feel isolated and unable to discuss their child's development and achievements with other parents. Seeking out parents of other gifted children can provide both an affirmative and informative network. The children may also benefit from opportunities to socialise with other gifted children in a family-oriented environment.

Finding resources within the community that sustain and promote enriched learning can make a valuable contribution to the child's development, and provide meaningful participation within the community. Many cultural institutions, such as Art Galleries, offer holiday or weekend educational programs. Parents can provide enrichment activities for their children from a young age, that encourage curiosity, imagination and an inquisitive mind.

The community can also provide opportunities for gifted children to contribute through service. Service learning may be particularly suitable for gifted students, who may be sensitive to issues of social justice and willing to express a generosity of spirit. Service learning can "encourage and inspire youth to become better people, to serve others when possible, and to make the world a better place" (Bruce-Davis & Chancey, 2012, p.722).

Questions parents ask

How can I keep my child from becoming bored, disengaged and underachieving?

Your child can become bored, *switched off* and underachieving both at home and at school for a variety of reasons. These reasons can include lack of stimulation and challenge, lack of responsibility for their own learning, lack of freedom to make decisions, lack of time to explore, lack of appreciation of effort and the experience of continually being *put down*. In later years, peer group pressure to conform often increases in importance, so much so, that your child may deliberately underachieve in order to be accepted. This particular issue is discussed in Chapter 4.

All human beings experience boredom and wise parents will help their children to see boredom as a positive rather than negative experience. Boredom can be an impetus to change and to seeking new learning experiences. Students can be encouraged to be

proactive rather than reactive in the face of boredom and to take a measure of responsibility for extending and enriching their own learning. This in turn enhances self-esteem and self-efficacy, especially in the teenage years.

Part of your child's learning will develop from having the freedom to make decisions and thus having the responsibility to be productive, interested or involved. To cope with boredom, however, and to perceive excitement in the deceptively simple things of our world is also part of growth towards maturity.

In Costa's view, "a Habit of Mind is a pattern of intellectual behaviours that leads to productive actions towards behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known" (Costa and Kallick, 2008). Dispositions such as the Habits of Mind, are foundational to successful learning at any age. One of Costa's sixteen Habits of Mind is *Responding with Wonderment and Awe*. Even though Costa observes that the Habit of Mind of *Responding with Wonderment and Awe* is "probably more caught than taught" (Costa and Kallick 2000, p.91), parents are in a unique position to model this disposition and encourage their child to respond to new knowledge and experiences with passion and amazement that such things can be. This can make a significant contribution to the child's intellectual stimulation and development as a successful learner.

Parents can also consider ways in which they may influence and contribute to their child's development of the fifteen other Habits of Mind that Costa has identified. These are:

- Persisting
- Listening with empathy and understanding
- Managing impulsivity
- Gathering data through all senses
- Thinking flexibly
- Creating, imagining and innovating
- Thinking about your thinking
- Striving for accuracy
- Taking responsible risks
- Applying past knowledge
- Finding humour
- Questioning and posing problems
- Thinking interdependently
- Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- Remaining open to continuous learning.

Further reading:

Habits of Mind website (Appendix E)

What can be done at home to support effective learning at school?

Your child will thrive in an environment where a wide range of interests and activities can be explored and enjoyed. These may include music, painting, writing, drawing, gardening, cooking, reading, science experiments, technology, computing, visiting zoos

and museums, sport, stamp collecting, craft work, learning a foreign language, animal husbandry, family games and discussions and inventing; the list is endless.

However, your child needs freedom to explore, experiment, make a mess, follow interests, make independent decisions, and have the opportunity to waste time and not be continually involved in activities provided by you or other adults. You need to be sensitive to your child's skills and interests and take time to *listen*, *discuss* and *answer* questions. This is vitally important for all children, including those who are gifted and talented. You may also have to learn to live with a child who has boundless energy, needs less sleep than you do and is wholly absorbed in a particular area of interest such as jazz music, poetry writing or cartoon drawing. You can share in the enjoyment and excitement created by these interests. If you, too, have a wide range of interests that can also be shared in some way, it may encourage your child to widen their scope of activities.

If you provide opportunities that stimulate your child and allow some freedoms you will create an enriched learning environment.

What are some guidelines around the use of technology for my gifted child?

Australian Guidelines have been developed to advise parents on the issue of screen-time for children. Key recommendations for screen time are cited below:

Australian Guidelines for screen time:

Australia's Physical Activity Recommendations recommend that children 5-18 years accumulate no more than 2 hours of screen time a day for entertainment (excluding educational purposes). Guidelines for children under five have also been released and recommend children younger than 2 years do not spend anytime viewing TV or other electronic media and for children 2-5 years less than 1 hour per day.

The link below is to the South Australian Government fact sheet entitled *Give the screen a rest. Active play is best*. Technology can be a very useful tool for gifted students, but should be used sparingly and only with older children. Technology should never replace the essential parent-child interactions that are so critical for language development, literacy and well-being.

http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/bf5f3e0045d0b6eda24fae9f9859b7b1/OPALscreenfactsheet-sss_20110217.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=bf5f3e0045d0b6eda24fae9f9859b7b1

How can I foster my gifted child's individuality whilst teaching them to observe reasonable social conventions?

For social living to be harmonious, certain rules need to be observed. Society itself imposes certain rules and disciplines, which are known to all. Consider the problems of driving erratically in traffic. When these rules are broken, the resultant disciplinary action is also known. Therefore, if by *discipline* you mean such social rules, then most families have them. Your child will feel more secure in a predictable environment where the rules are clearly understood. For example, if the smooth running of family life depends on meals being served at certain times then they need to observe this convention. If your child is to be accepted they need to learn what is socially acceptable in particular contexts. Disregard of minor social conventions, which have little

implication for others, such as wearing unconventional clothes or hairstyles, or having an interest in unusual topics, ought not to be regarded by you as serious discipline problems. In your family life there needs to be a balance between rules to be observed and freedom to explore and experiment. Discussion between you and your child can be useful in recognising the social and personal consequences of some behaviour. It can also help to clarify expectations, feelings and needs. Your child needs to understand the range of behaviours available and their likely consequences. Just as basic academic skills need to be taught, so do social skills need to be taught and reinforced. As your child becomes older, negotiations between you and your teenager will need to take place about the rules to be observed for harmonious family life.

Many organisations conduct parenting courses that are valuable in helping parents discuss family issues including discipline. You can obtain information related to these courses from various agencies and individuals including the following: doctors, psychologists (including Guidance Officers), school Principals, school health services, school counsellors, social workers, the local council and the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD).

What activities are available in the community?

If you live in an urban area, your child could be encouraged to explore interests by joining clubs, the library, taking part in classes such as drama, pottery and language or forming a club with other children who have similar interests. This increases the potential to work and socialise with others who share and work at similar levels of interest and ability. There may be someone in the neighbourhood, either an older student or an adult, who shares the same interest and has a high degree of expertise and who can act as a mentor, under your supervision, to provide challenge and stimulation to your child.

For children living in isolated areas there is a wide variety of extension courses available through the Internet and Distance Education. There are also holiday workshops organised for children with particular gifts, talents and interests such as music summer schools, writers' groups and drama workshops. You can be involved, therefore, in providing opportunities for your child to pursue various activities.

My child is wanting to do everything, how can I encourage interests without overscheduling?

Gifted children may have wide-reaching interests and a love of learning in a variety of areas. Learning to prioritise is an important life skill for parents and their children. It is essential to find a balance between superficial coverage of many activities and deep learning in a few areas. Your child's interests, age and energy levels in addition to family resources need to be considered when selecting extra-curricular pursuits.

What suggestions do you have when travelling with a gifted child?

As part of your planning for your trip, you would be wise to consult with the child's school about how the child's absence from school can be managed in a positive way. Travel can provide a wonderful opportunity for learning and acquiring different perspectives about the world beyond the classroom, if managed well. Before you go, your child may be involved in researching and contributing to the itinerary, and while you are away, they might be encouraged to use higher order thinking about similarities and differences between their home and places visited. There are a plethora of technological devices these days that will enable your child to keep a travel journal that describes their experiences and contains their reflections upon the trip. Given the accessibility that technology delivers, it should be possible for your child to continue vital studies whilst away and maintain contact with their teacher, where appropriate.

Further reading:

Matthews, D. & Foster, J. (2009). *Being smart about gifted education*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

CHAPTER 4: The school environment

Introduction

There are three sectors of schooling in South Australia: the government sector (DECD), the independent sector (AISSA) and the Catholic sector (CESA). Whichever school sector responsible for education, and whichever school your child attends, the main contributors that influence their achievement will be the student themselves, their home, the school they attend, the teacher they have and the curriculum and teaching strategies applied (Hattie, 2008).

Parents should be encouraged to know that the current educational climate is placing emphasis on personalizing learning to meet the needs of diverse students, including those who are gifted. There is advice within the Australian Curriculum and direction within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2011) that make clear reference to providing for advanced learners. There are two standards that are of particular relevance to the education of gifted and talented students, although all are important.

- Standard 1: *Know students and how they learn*
 - Standard 1.5: *Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students **across the full range of abilities** (emphasis added)*
- Standard 3: *Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.*
 - Standard 3.1: *Establish challenging learning goals*
 - Standard 3.7: *Engage parents in the educative process*

Further information: www.aitsl.edu.au

Parents are wise to seek and manage the information that will help them support their gifted child throughout their education. They have an important role to play as advocates for the right of their children to receive an education commensurate with their needs and abilities. Managing the paperwork can be as simple as setting up 3 files:

- (1) for reading and research about giftedness;
- (2) for relevant paperwork pertaining to their child; and
- (3) for records of meetings, emails and phone conversations (Cramer, 2013).

Informed parents make the best advocates for their children.

Questions parents ask

What systemic policies relate to educating gifted and talented students in South Australia?

There are three systemic policies on the education of gifted students that parents may access:

- Department of Education and Child Development (DECD)
- Catholic Education Australia
- Lutheran Schools Association.

Understanding the systemic policy relevant to your child's school will assist in establishing reasonable expectations of the school's capacity to provide for your child's educational needs. In addition to the systemic policy, individual schools may have their

own policy for the education of gifted and talented students which should be accessible through the school's website. Refer to Appendix F for links to policies.

Are there special learning needs for gifted and talented children?

The Australian Senate inquiry into the Education of Gifted Children (Collins, 2001)

emphasised that gifted children have special educational needs, and that if these needs are not met, they are likely to underachieve and even drop out of school. Understanding that gifted children have special needs requires educators to make adjustments to their learning tasks in order to meet these needs as an issue of social justice. All children have the right to an education that meets their needs.

All students need to be challenged by learning tasks in order to grow and progress and should be provided with the appropriate level of challenge that matches their level of readiness to learn. If schoolwork is too easy, students will be bored; if work is too hard, students will be discouraged from attempting it. Like the Goldilocks analogy, the level of challenge needs to be just right for students to feel comfortable with and engaged in their learning.

The wide variety of individual differences which exists among gifted and talented children means that they cannot be treated as a homogenous group – their learning needs will vary. Some gifted children (for example, those who are profoundly gifted and those who have a learning disability) should have an individual education plan, sometimes referred to as an IEP or NEP, to outline the educational provisions required to meet their learning needs. In general, gifted and talented children need a wide range of experiences, which will challenge them and extend their learning. They need the opportunity to engage with abstract concepts and ideas, and, in their area of strength, to work at a greater pace, depth and breadth than their age peers. They may also benefit from opportunities to work with other gifted students who are at similar levels of readiness to learn.

What is the Australian Curriculum?

The Australian Curriculum applies to all states and territories, all systems, all schools, all teachers and all students, Foundation to Year 10 (F-10). In December 2008, all Australian Education Ministers issued the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008) that proposed two main goals for education in Australia in the 21st century. The first goal is that Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence and the second goal is that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. For gifted children and their families, the key words here are *equity* and *excellence* and this is clearly stated in the excerpt below:

all Australian governments and all school sectors must promote a culture of excellence in all schools, by supporting them to provide challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all students to explore and build on their gifts and talents (MCEETYA, 2008 p.7).

The Australian Curriculum has a 3 dimensional design: Learning Areas, the General Capabilities and the Cross-Curriculum Priorities as shown in Diagram 2.

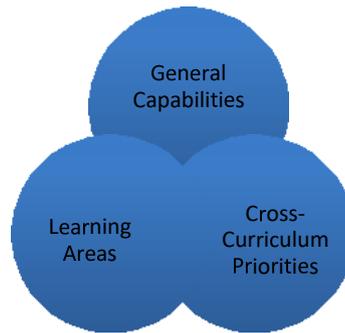


Diagram 2: The Australian Curriculum v7.4

The Learning Areas will enable students to develop deep knowledge in the familiar disciplines of English, Mathematics, Science, Languages, Humanities and the Arts. The General Capabilities are dispositional and aspirational and they underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise. Although there are seven equally important General Capabilities: Literacy, Numeracy, ICTs, Personal and Social, Critical and Creative Thinking, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding, the two most important for gifted students are likely to be Critical and Creative Thinking and Ethical Understanding. This is because higher order thinking skills enable gifted learners to be challenged and also because of the well-established link between high cognitive ability and moral sensitivity (Lovecky, 1997; Silverman, 2012).

The Cross-curriculum Priorities are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia and Sustainability. They are designed to assist students to develop a deeper understanding of the globalized world in which they live. The Cross-curriculum priorities are to be embedded in learning areas where relevant and appropriate.

What is the Diversity advice of the Australian Curriculum about the education of gifted and talented students?

On its Home Page, the Australian Curriculum has a section entitled Student Diversity and this encompasses Students with a Disability, Gifted and Talented Students and Students with EAL/D. The opening sentence of the Gifted and Talented section is unequivocal.

Gifted and talented students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities drawn from the Australian Curriculum and aligned with their individual learning needs, strengths, interests and goals (Australian Curriculum v7.4).

Parents are advised to read all of the Diversity Advice, especially if they have a child who is gifted and learning disabled (GLD).

How can the flexible design of the Australian Curriculum be used to cater for gifted and talented students?

In the Student Diversity section, there is also a section entitled *Illustrations of Personalised Learning*. This acknowledges that students have unique learning needs and that curriculum can be adjusted to match those needs. There are examples in this section that illustrate how a Learning Area can be combined with a General Capability

and/or a Cross-Curriculum Priority to personalise learning for gifted students. One example is a gifted student studying Year 8 Science whose interest in energy was combined with the Cross-Curriculum Priority of Sustainability to provide a challenging learning experience. There are also other opportunities within the Learning Areas for teachers of gifted students to provide enrichment and acceleration in both content and skills.

Further information can be located at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

What provisions are appropriate or possible for gifted students?

There is no single best way of providing for gifted students, as their needs vary and staff expertise, school contexts and resources are all variable. The lists below suggest some possible provisions that could form part of a school's response to the diversity of gifted students:

Individual classroom

- clustering of gifted students
- concept-based curriculum
- differentiated curriculum
- pre-assessment prior to commencing a unit of work to determine what students already know in order to determine their level of readiness and appropriate level of challenge
- higher order thinking skills
- open-ended tasks
- attention to affective curriculum
- opportunity to study real life/authentic problems
- student choice and negotiation where a joint agreement is drawn up between student and teacher to determine the nature of the task and the timeline for completion
- independent study where students are given time to develop an individual unit of work of their choice
- specialist teacher working with the class teacher to support and extend the gifted students in the classroom
- Individual Learning Plan (ILP) or Negotiated Education Plan (NEP)
- personalised learning plan as suggested in the *Illustrations of practice* in the Australian Curriculum.

School organisation

- policy for the education of gifted students that is linked to other school policies and the school's mission statement
- specialist gifted education coordinator to work with students and staff
- experts in residence, where schools use the expertise of an individual on a regular basis within the school setting to develop and extend a particular area of interest
- acceleration, either by subject or year level (Appendix D)
- special interest schools
- part time withdrawal from regular classrooms for participation in gifted program
- selective classes for gifted students

- multi-age classes where students of differing age groups work together within the one class
- cluster grouping of gifted students within a year level
- individual timetabling which enables students to work at different year levels and at different ability levels
- special classes
- clubs
- competitions, either national or local.

School and the wider community

- cluster grouping of schools where groups of schools share human and material resources to enable them to expand options and opportunities for gifted students
- concurrent enrolment in university and secondary school.
- tutoring or extension opportunities in the area of the child's giftedness
- mini-courses, using expertise from industry, commerce, tertiary institutions, government agencies, and held in school time or after school for a number of sessions
- student workshops organised at weekends or in school holidays to enable children of similar abilities and interests to socialise and work together
- university summer schools.

Under what circumstances should I seek early entry for my child?

Gifted children are entitled to start pre-school and school earlier than usual if this is determined to be an appropriate provision. The policy guiding this can be found in the Early Years Fact sheet 2 (2014), available at

http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Early_entry_preschool_FA_1.pdf

Early entry is provided at the discretion of the School Principal, and should be determined by consultation between the school, the Pre-school and the parents. Some ideas to consider are suggested below.

1. The further the child's age is from the approved entering age, the higher the IQ required. For example, a child who is 4¾ is required to have an IQ of 130 or higher and a child of 4½ an IQ of 145 or higher.
2. There should be a comprehensive evaluation of the child's intellectual functioning, academic readiness and social and emotional maturity.
3. Physically the child should be in good health. The child should have sufficient gross and fine motor skills to be able to adapt to class and playground activities.
4. Academically the child should demonstrate readiness for school.
5. Socially and emotionally the child should be free of any serious adjustment problems and demonstrate a desire to learn. Candidates for early entry would be those who readily adapt to pre-school experiences, or have friends in the Reception class.
6. The receiving teacher should have a positive attitude toward the early admission of the child.
7. Care should be exercised not to build up unrealistic expectations of the child experiencing early entry. Parents need to have a realistic understanding of the school's capability to meet the child's individual needs.

Reference: Feldhusen, John F., (1992). Early Admission and Grade Advancement for Young Gifted Learners. *Gifted Child Today*,15(2).

How do I choose a pre-school, primary or secondary school for my gifted child?

Children and their needs differ, and schools differ. It is worthwhile taking the time to visit and meet with the Principal and/or other relevant personnel in possible schools for your child, to find a *good fit*. Be prepared to take your list of questions and to make notes. Many schools have open days where you can see teachers and students in action. Refer to Appendix B.

What is acceleration and is it suitable for my child?

Research strongly supports the benefits of acceleration. The Senate Committee report (Collins, 2001, p. XIV) said that “there is overwhelming research evidence that appropriate acceleration of gifted students who are socially and emotionally ready usually has highly advantageous outcomes”. Further, in *A Nation Deceived*, evidence indicates “that when children’s academic and social needs are not met, the result is boredom and disengagement from school” (Colangelo, Assouline & Gross, 2004). Hattie (2009, p. 100) asked the following question in his meta-analysis relating to achievement: “If acceleration is so successful then why is it one of the least used methods for gifted students?” The research evidence is so strong that Hattie stated that “we may need to question the negative impact on gifted students *if they are not accelerated* (emphasis added)”.

Acceleration should not merely involve learning the content of a subject as quickly as possible but should also involve time to reflect on what has been learnt in order to experiment with ideas and to use the learned content as a stepping stone to investigate and explore other areas. Time needs to be made available in the school program for this to occur.

Acceleration can take several forms:

- Subject acceleration where a gifted child can progress quickly in any subject where talents are displayed; for example, a six year old student could work with twelve year old students in computer study, or an eleven year old could work with sixteen year olds in music.
- Year level acceleration (grade skipping); for example where a Year 4 child is promoted to Year 5 or 6. Radical acceleration of more than one year is only recommended for profoundly gifted students.
- Early entry when a gifted child displays academic and social readiness to begin a level of schooling at a younger age than their age peers. This may occur at pre-school, primary school, secondary school and tertiary education.
- Condensing/compacting/telescoping what is taught so that it is covered in a shorter space of time; for example, a three year course condensed into two years.

The Australian Curriculum advice on Student Diversity specifies that parents must be consulted if the school is proposing to accelerate their child or make a substantial adjustment to their learning program. There is no set answer as to whether your child should or should not be accelerated in one way or another. Both you and the school

need to work together when considering this issue, taking into account your child's feelings and readiness, your attitudes, as well as those of the school and your child's social, emotional and physical development. Your child may well be already socialising with people of similar ability who are at a different age level.

Working collaboratively, you, the school Principal and/or relevant staff need to consider the following questions before making a decision about acceleration for your child:

- Does the social, emotional and physical development of your child in any way impede their ability to perform at an advanced level?
- Is it possible to begin acceleration in the present classroom by using a learning support person or independent study?
- Is it possible for acceleration to take place in a combined class of mixed age levels?
- Is the teacher, into whose class your child will advance, flexible, accepting and knowledgeable about giftedness and willing and able to differentiate the curriculum as appropriate?
- How will acceleration be monitored and how might this be reviewed and supported?
- Will your child's abilities, achievements, interests and learning preferences be enhanced by acceleration?

To assess the appropriateness of acceleration for a child, it is wise for parents and the school to consult the international guidelines on suitability for acceleration.

[www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/pdf_doc/accelerated_guide.pdf\(pp.37-38\)](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/pdf_doc/accelerated_guide.pdf(pp.37-38))

Further reading:

Colangelo, N., Assouline, S., Gross, M. (2004). A Nation Deceived. In *Institute for Research and Policy on Acceleration*, (2006) University of Iowa. Retrieved from http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Deceived/

What can be done for my child who enters school at five and has already been reading for two years or more?

It is important that you share this kind of information with teachers before formal schooling begins. The first day of school is not the best time to discuss your child's needs, concerns or interests as teachers and the Principal will be involved in settling children into the school routine. It may, therefore, be useful for you to make an appointment to speak with the teacher or Principal a few days before the start of school so that information regarding books read at home and particular interests can be shared. This will alert teachers to your child's special needs as an advanced reader and that their curriculum will need to be adjusted to meet their learning needs. The flexible design of the Australian Curriculum should enable this to occur.

Parents meeting with the school librarian and forming a relationship with them is valuable, as the child may feel secure with the sympathetic librarian who has wide knowledge of suitable material for all ages and abilities. Your child can choose books from the library based on personal interests and can share stories with the rest of the class or the family through activities such as model making, puppetry, painting, carrying

out a science experiment, devising a television commercial to promote a particular story or using musical instruments to introduce characters. The nature of these activities will depend on your child's strengths and interests. Activities and questions related to personal reading need to be open ended so that the child is able to respond in a variety of ways to show their understanding. Some ways could include making models, dressing up as a book character, painting, drawing, and making character puppets.

Your child needs access to a wide variety of books so that there is a time to read at a suitable level and a time to read books which you may think are too easy but are still of interest. You may worry if your child continually chooses to read material well below an appropriate reading level. One way of overcoming this is for you to read to your child from a variety of books, including children's classics.

The main aim of any reading program for a young child is that they find enjoyment and interest in what is being read, and that both you and the teacher can share in this enjoyment. Parents are reminded that children may be asynchronous in their development so that although their child is an advanced reader it may not follow that their writing skills are also advanced.

My child says they are bored and that they have been "turned off" learning at school. How can I get the school to cater better for them?

Initially there are two steps that can be helpful. The first is to discuss with your child what they see as wrong; what are the reasons for them being bored and disengaged and what do they want to do about it. This is because the responsibility for avoiding boredom lies not only with you and school staff, but also with your child.

Secondly, you need to be fully acquainted with school policies and the classroom program as you can then approach the school confidently and discuss whether your child is perhaps repeating work done before, or is finding the work too easy and therefore is not being challenged or stimulated. It would also give guidance as to whether work is being completed quickly and more of the same is being given as a *reward*. You can then more readily find out how the teacher perceives the situation as it relates to your child.

You can talk to school staff about ways of giving opportunities to your child for involvement in independent study, working with others with similar interests and needs and for more freedom to make decisions so that they are more actively involved in personal learning. If your child is gifted in one particular area such as art, there may be opportunities to work with older children in this subject at certain times during the school day. The issue of acceleration is discussed earlier in this section and in Appendix C. There may be advisory support staff who can also give advice in this area.

Why do some gifted children underachieve and what can be done at school and at home?

Children are described as underachievers when standardised test scores show capabilities that are not reflected in school performance. Or it may be that both parents and teachers, through observation, think that a child is not working to their full capacity. There are many possible causes for this and initially it is wise to check the child's health

and physical condition. However, the cause is usually a combination of factors relating to the school, the home and the child.

In homes where education is regarded as being of little importance, children may well adopt negative attitudes towards schooling. Children can also feel that they are only valued for what they can do and not as individuals, and out of resentment, deliberately underachieve. Children may also underachieve when parents do not present a united, positive front about the value of education. Criticising the teacher or the school in front of the child may give the child permission to underachieve. Parents should try to avoid involving their children in any negative discussions and resolve any issues with the school or teacher without the child present.

Cultural group membership can often be more important than outstanding individual performance and children may deliberately underachieve to conform to the group identity.

Within the school environment, there are a number of factors that may contribute to the gifted child's underachievement. For instance, when children have always found work too easy and there has been little challenge or stimulation, there can be a tendency to do just enough to *get by* and no more. Some children may have specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or dyscalculia, which hinder them from displaying their full capabilities and if the school has not addressed these needs, their achievement can be impacted. Too much pressure can be put on a child to succeed at school, and again, resentment of this pressure may be shown by underachieving.

As children get older, peer group pressure can also have a marked influence. Children sometimes deliberately underachieve because they feel that by doing so they are more socially acceptable. Stereotyping of girls and their role in society has meant that there has been a tendency for them to shy away from, or not to excel in, areas such as mathematics, science and engineering, which are traditionally thought of as the domain of boys. This problem of stereotyping can also apply for boys in such areas as dance and drama.

Peer group pressure can be lessened where schools foster individuality and excellence in all students, in academic and non-academic areas. It can also be lessened when a variety of curriculum options is provided and opportunities are made available for students to make decisions and to work with other students of similar abilities, needs and interests.

How can I advocate for my gifted child without being regarded as a "pushy parent"?

As preparation, parents would be wise to read the advice on Student Diversity given in the Australian Curriculum www.australiancurriculum.edu.au and any systemic policies relating to gifted and talented students that are available.

The education of all children is the joint responsibility of home and school. Therefore cooperative relationships need to be established especially in regard to good communication between you and your child's teachers.

All parents have the right to expect educational programs that meet the needs of their children. However, it must be realised that schools and teachers vary considerably in their capacities to respond to parental requests, as well as in their abilities to cater for individual differences among children. Therefore, how you approach the school to discuss your child's needs is of vital importance. Good rapport between you and the teachers is helpful. Once a positive relationship has been established, it becomes an easier task to make specific requests of teachers and schools and to discuss matters of concern in relation to individuals and groups of students. If time for you to be actively involved in the school activities is limited, there are still a number of ways you can show support for the school and staff by such things as making thoughtful responses to newsletters, indicating how much excursions or activities were enjoyed, attending interviews and parent evenings.

It may also be advantageous to acquaint yourself thoroughly with your school's policies, especially those relating to the education of gifted students. This will assist you to know requests that may go beyond what the school can reasonably offer. However, if you feel communications between you and the school are unproductive, in your discussions with the school it may be helpful to involve a third person, who is outside the school environment but still within the educational system.

Where cooperative relationships are established, conflicts are likely to be minimised and requests can be made without a parent being labelled "pushy".

How can I help the school?

This question has two aspects: you may want to assist the school regarding your own particular child or you may want to assist in the wider context of the school's program.

It is important that you share information about your child with teachers; particular passions, special experiences, particular strengths and weaknesses, out of school activities, books recently read, projects undertaken at home, relationships with others, particular needs and concerns and ways in which giftedness and talent are fostered at home. Conversely, teachers need to share their experiences with you, as your child might behave quite differently at home compared to school and this exchange of information can be most enlightening.

After establishing a cooperative relationship, its maintenance is a continuing process and one that you will probably need to re-establish from year to year if the teacher changes.

Also, you may feel that you have a special area of expertise such as art, craft, woodwork, computer technology, mechanics, electronics, poetry writing, music or science that would enrich the class programme. You could approach the school and offer to work with small groups of gifted and talented children in these areas.

Another way to assist the school is for you to become a member of the Parents' Club or the school's Governing Council where you can discuss with other parents and staff the needs of all children, including those who are gifted and talented.

What are some specific needs of gifted and talented girls at school?

The peer group to which girls belong, especially at high school level, may not value high academic performance, ambition and career orientation and so the girls may underachieve. In some cases girls deliberately underachieve because they want to be socially accepted by their class mates and do not want to appear to have more ability than boys with whom they may wish to develop friendships. The attitudes of school and teachers are important here and can play an important part in fostering individuality as well as excellence in all students, in academic and non-academic areas.

Schools need to encourage and make opportunities for girls to take part in courses traditionally thought of as the domain of boys, such as engineering, mechanics, computer technology, mathematics and science.

For girls, traditional expectations and lack of peer group support can have a significant effect during adolescence. Both they and their parents may need counselling in order to work out their roles as women, not only in the wider Australian society but also within their own particular cultural community, as some communities may not value their particular abilities.

Further reading:

Kerr, B.A. (1994). *Smart girls, gifted women*, (Revised ed.). U.S.A.: Gifted Psychology Press.

Kerr, B. & McKay, R. (2014). *Smart Girls in the 21st Century: Understanding Talented Girls and Women*. Great Potential Press.

Neihart, M., Reis, S., Robinson, N. & Moon, S. (Eds.)(2001). *The social and emotional development of gifted children: What do we know?* Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Vialle, W. (2007). Pink or Paris? Giftedness in popular culture. *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*, 16(1), 5-11.

What are some specific needs of gifted and talented boys at school?

Gifted boys face some challenges. One is the steady decline in boys' academic achievement and attitudes to schooling, especially in the middle years, from about Year 6 to Year 10. Another challenge, particularly strong in Australia and also targeting the middle years, is the growth of an anti-learning culture, the *cool to be a fool* syndrome which tells boys that it is not cool to be smart. Together they prevent many gifted boys from reaching their full potential.

Parents should be aware that gifted boys have some gender based characteristics which are inherently different from gifted girls. In general, they will tend to:

- be more analytical
- be more focused on one idea at a time
- be less able to think about several ideas simultaneously
- be more developed in technology skills
- prefer to work alone rather than in teams
- prefer to analyse emotions rather than express them.

Gifted boys who lack self-knowledge and awareness about their own learning, and who have not developed good study habits, may underestimate the amount of work required for success. Like all of us, they desire success and fear failure, so when they are surprised and disappointed by their failure or low results, they may switch off and become difficult to motivate. In extreme cases, they may opt out of their education altogether.

Further reading:

Kerr, B.A. & Cohn, S.J. (2001). *Smart boys, gifted men*. U.S.A.: Great Potential Press

How can I help my child who is being bullied and teased?

Some gifted children, may occasionally be subjected to bullying at school because peers may regard some of their characteristics such as sensitivity, intensity or a passion for justice as being different.

The media is replete with stereotypical images of 'nerds' and while "these goofy images of gifted kids may make us laugh...when they are applied to you, they're not funny anymore" (Galbraith & Delisle, 2011 p. 211). A sense of being different can be the cause of a gifted child attempting to mask their giftedness in order to be more socially acceptable. Of concern is the indication from the research that gifted students do not always tell their parents or teachers about being bullied, or seek help, so it is important to be alert to outward signs of being bullied, such as withdrawal, problems eating or sleeping and school refusal.

There are degrees of bullying, ranging from teasing or name-calling and social exclusion to physical intimidation and violence. Intervention strategies will differ according to the nature of the bullying behaviours. Some children are also more susceptible than others to the ill-effects of being bullied, so any proactive efforts to enhance your child's resilience may help them to cope.

According to Galbraith & Delisle (2011) effective teasing depends on who is doing the teasing, the reason why they are teasing and whether the victim accepts or rejects the teasing. If your child is being teased, you can discuss these questions together in order to help them to understand and manage the situation. Parents can work with the strengths of their intellectually gifted children to build resilience and develop coping behaviours.

If you consider that your child is being bullied at school, speak to the class teacher or Principal to alert them and request that they put into effect some strategies from the school's bullying/harassment policy to assist your child. For example finding a supportive peer group may help. If the bullying is constant and pervasive, your child may need more intensive support. In this case, it may be necessary to consult a registered psychologist.

Further reading:

The following websites are highly recommended and contain a wealth of resources for parents, teachers and students:

<http://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

<http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/>

Peterson, J. & Ray, K. (2006). Bullying and the gifted: Victims, perpetrators, prevalence and effects. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50(2) 148-168.

What if my child is bullying others?

There is research to suggest that some gifted children and adolescents can also be bullies (Peterson & Ray, 2006). They are able to use their intellectual ability to lash out with sarcasm and verbal put-downs. As Galbraith and Delisle (2011, p. 217) observed, gifted students “are also not immune to bullying others, particularly if it means a chance to showcase their often unusually sharp wit.” Gifted students may use their verbal ability to retaliate when teased for being gifted. Some may find it hard to tolerate others who are slow to learn or who are not as able.

Gifted students should be counselled that differences should be respected rather than ridiculed and equipped with strategies and support to achieve this. “In terms of long term health and well-being, it is just as important for educators and parents to intervene with gifted bullies as with gifted victims of bullying” (Peterson & Ray, 2006 p. 164).

Further reading:

The following websites are highly recommended and contain a wealth of resources for parents, teachers and students:

<http://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

<http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/>

Peterson, J. & Ray, K. (2006). Bullying and the gifted: Victims, perpetrators, prevalence and effects. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 50(2) 148-168.

APPENDIX A: Parent checklist

Checklists are one way of identifying gifted children, and may provide some useful confirmation of parents' intuitive understanding of their children. Checklists may also provide important data for the school and may form the basis of a conversation with your child's teacher. There are many parent checklists available which focus on documented characteristics and behaviours of gifted children. We include a sample item from a checklist to be found at the following address

https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/EDUCFile/Module2_PRIMARY.pdf

Things My Young Child Has Done

Checklist item:

My child:

1. Has quick accurate recall of information.

(e.g. remembers complex happenings and describes them long afterwards in clear details; learns notes and words to songs quickly; remembers landmarks and turns on the way to familiar places.)

SA ⑩ ⑨ ⑧ ⑦ ⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① ① SD

Unsure or don't know

A personal example:

An example of a parent response to the above checklist item, follows;

My child: Antonio

SA ⑩ ⑨ ⑧ ⑦ ⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ① ① SD

Unsure or don't know

A personal example:

Antonio was only 18 months old when his grandparents moved house. After his first visit to Grandma's, he directed the way home from the back seat of the car by pointing. The 20-minute trip was achieved perfectly. By age two-and-a-half he could remember the words to 20 nursery rhymes, which all had to be recited every night!

It is clear that Antonio has an excellent memory, both verbally and spatially. The completion of the rest of the checklist will give an overall picture of Antonio's ability and highlight his needs.

APPENDIX B: Which pre-school or school?

All children need, and have a right to an educational environment that:

- respects diversity and nurtures a sense of belonging
- fosters learner well-being
- promotes and acknowledges an ethos of excellence across the creative, intellectual, physical, social and emotional areas.

In addition to these crucial elements, a gifted child may need additional provisions.

Contrary to common misconceptions, gifted children do not automatically achieve at school. Without specific identification and interventions a number of them coast along in their learning, underachieve, mask their abilities or disengage from learning altogether. Research has demonstrated that appropriate challenge and support, in an educational environment that values their giftedness, will enable a gifted child to flourish. Benbow (1992) stated that “to bring giftedness fully to life, cognitive faculties have to be energized through an enriched environment”.

The following questions provide points of discussion with the school Principal that may guide your selection of an appropriate school for your gifted child:

1. Does the school have a whole school policy on the education of gifted and talented students, including a working definition of gifted and talented students?
2. Does the school have specific policies that address the needs of gifted students, for example, *Acceleration* and *Individual Learning Plans*?
3. Does the school have a transparent and valid procedure for identifying giftedness?
4. How is the school identifying and meeting the needs of gifted students who are under-achieving?
5. Does the school have provisions for gifted and talented students, for example a withdrawal program, or extended learning opportunities?
6. Is counselling available if required to support the affective development and well-being of gifted students?
7. As the Australian Curriculum requires teachers to extend and challenge gifted students in the regular classroom, what evidence exists to demonstrate this is the case?
8. Does the school have profiles of the characteristics of gifted learners in the subject disciplines?
9. Do gifted students have opportunities to work with other gifted students in their classes and at other year levels?
10. Does the school have a qualified Gifted Education Coordinator?
11. Does the school have other teachers with qualifications in Gifted Education?
12. What professional learning is provided for teachers in gifted and talented education?

The work of Ann Matison is acknowledged in this Appendix.

Further reading:

Cathcart, R. (1996). Choosing a School: A guide to finding the right school for your gifted child. Retrieved from http://www.giftedreach.org.nz/pdf/choosing_a_school.pdf

APPENDIX C: International guidelines on acceleration

International Guidelines on Suitability for Accelerated Progression

Some of the guidelines used internationally to assist school Principals in determining gifted students' suitability for accelerated progression include the following:

1. It is not necessary for every gifted student to be psychometrically tested. However, in the case of students who are being considered for accelerated progression, there should be a comprehensive psychological assessment of their intellectual functioning, academic skill levels and social-emotional adjustment by a trained psychologist.
2. Academically, the student should demonstrate skill levels above the average of the class they desire to enter.
3. Socially and emotionally, the student should be free of any serious adjustment problems. Principals should be aware, however, that in some gifted students social or emotional difficulties may have been caused by inappropriately low grade placement. In such cases the situation may be alleviated by accelerated progression.
4. The student should be in good physical health. The student's size, however, should be considered only to the extent that competitive sport may be viewed as important in later years.
5. It is important that the student should not feel unduly pressured by parents. The student themselves should be eager to move ahead.
6. The receiving teacher must have positive attitudes towards the grade advancement and must be willing to help the student adjust to the new situation.
7. Judgements about the student's social and emotional maturity should include input from the student's parents and the psychologist. Gifted students are sometimes rejected by their classmates. It is important that teachers do not confuse the absence of close peer relationships with social immaturity.
8. Ideally, grade advancement should occur at natural transition points, such as the beginning of the school year. However, mid-year advancement may sometimes be desirable where the student's prior teacher and receiving teacher may more easily confer about how best to help the student make a smooth transition.
9. All cases of accelerated progression should be arranged on a trial basis of at least six weeks. The student should be aware that if the trial period is not a success, they will return to the original grade placement. It is important that in such a circumstance the student should not be made to feel that they have *failed*.

10. Care should be exercised not to build up excessive expectations from grade advancement. A small minority of gifted students are so far advanced in their intellectual or academic development that one year of accelerated progression may still leave them bored at school. For such students further advancement may be advisable at a later period in their schooling.
11. Decisions regarding accelerated progression should be based on facts rather than myths. The research literature reveals that accelerated progression benefits the gifted student both academically and socially. Conversely, failure to advance a highly gifted student may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation and maladjustment.

More guidelines on Acceleration:

1. There should be a comprehensive evaluation of the child.
2. Intellectually the child should have an IQ of 130 or higher or should have a level of mental development that is at least one standard deviation from the mean.
3. Academically the child should demonstrate skill levels of at least one year above the class into which they would be advanced.
4. If the child is high in several academic areas but low in only one or two they may be advanced as long as there is help available in the weaker subjects.
5. If the child is advanced in only one or two academic areas they should remain in the present class but be allowed to work with a higher class for the subject in which they excel.
6. In most cases the child should be socially and emotionally free of any serious adjustment problems and have demonstrated persistence and motivation, however in some cases adjustment problems may have been caused by inappropriate grade placement and acceleration will alleviate the problem.
7. Physically the child should be in good health. Physical size should only be considered to the extent that competitive sports may be important in later years. Even that problem is unimportant if teams are chosen on age rather than grade level.
8. The child should not feel pressured to advance.
9. The teacher who will have the child in the advanced class should be positive about the acceleration and be prepared to help the child adjust to the new class.
10. Mid-year and end of year acceleration are both acceptable. Mid-year has the advantage of both teachers still working in the school so both can support the child. End of year has the advantage of all the children changing class. Placing the child in a vertically grouped class has advantages in that the child can join the

class at the lower level, complete two years in one and then advance to the next class with an established social group.

11. Acceleration can be done on a trial basis. The child could attend the higher grade part time to establish whether it will work, or there could be a time limit within which the child is free to return if the acceleration is proving unsuccessful.
12. Caution is needed not to build excessive expectations from acceleration. The child should not be made to feel a failure if it does not go well.
13. Some children are so advanced that single grade acceleration is insufficient. This would happen if the child is 3 or more standard deviations above the mean or 4 or more years above the current year level. Depending on the child, it is useful to do such acceleration in several small steps over a period of time.
14. Teachers should be aware that failure to accelerate a gifted child may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation and maladjustment.

Feldhusen, John F. (1992). Early Admission and Grade Placement for Young Gifted Learners. *Gifted Child Today*. 15(2)

APPENDIX D: Annotated bibliography - Books

Delisle, J. R. (2006). *Parenting gifted kids: Tips for raising happy and successful children.* Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

James Delisle writes in a very readable style. He is a psychologist who has extensive experience in counselling gifted children and advocating for them. He has also collaborated with Judy Galbraith in writing guidebooks for students and for teachers dealing with their unique perspectives.

Halstead, J. (2009). *Some of my best friends are books: Guiding gifted readers (3rd edition).* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

This is a great resource to support gifted readers of any age. There are suggestions for books to read that are appropriate to different age ranges and developmental themes, such as gifted identity. There is also some background information about characteristics and needs of gifted readers to help understand their challenges.

Kerr, B. (1994), *Smart Girls: A new psychology of girls, women and giftedness,* Revised Edition, Scottsdale, AZ, Gifted Psychology Press.

Reading this comprehensive, well-researched and definitive book about gifted girls and women is a must for everyone who is closely connected to a gifted girl. Of particular interest are the chapters on *The Adolescence of Gifted Girls, Barriers to Achievement* and *Guiding Gifted Girls.*

Kerr, B & Cohn, S. (2001) *Smart Boys: Talent, manhood and the search for meaning,* Scottsdale Arizona, Great Potent Press (formerly Gifted Psychology Press).

This remarkable book about gifted boys is also well researched and it too, has become a definitive text – the reference you always go to when thinking about gifted boys. The four sections: *Giftedness and Masculinity, Milestones and Danger Zones, Special Challenges for Gifted Boys* and *Guiding Smart Boys* address all of the issues involved in parenting and educating gifted boys.

Martin, A. (2003). *How to motivate your child.* Sydney, NSW: Bantam Books.

Dr. Andrew Martin is an Australian psychologist specialising in student motivation. This book is extremely helpful for parents and teachers and would deserve a five star rating if it were a motion picture! It contains really helpful strategies for boosting children's motivation. Chapter 3, for example, deals with *Increasing your Child's Self-Belief.* His latest book, published by Bantam Books in 2005, *How to help your child fly through life: The 20 big issues,* looks to be just as useful.

Matthews, D.J. & Foster, J.F. (2009). *Being smart about gifted education: A guidebook for educators and parents.* Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

These are Canadian authors, and their coverage of gifted development is highly readable and informed by credible research. Whilst providing practical advice, the authors also raise questions to promote your thinking about giftedness. This is important because it provides the information that parents can use as a springboard to support and advocate for your gifted child's needs.

APPENDIX E: Annotated bibliography - Websites

All websites active July, 2014 and are listed in alphabetical order.

Australian Association for the Education of Gifted and Talented (AAEGT)

<http://www.aaegt.net.au/>

The national association conducts a bi-annual conference in different capital cities, publishes the *Australasian Journal for Giftedness and Talent*, and provides information and useful links to other resources.

Aussie Educator

<http://www.aussieeducator.org.au/education/specificareas/gifted=2.html>

The Aussie Educator general website has a specific page of links to Australian associations and useful articles from around the world. The link given here relates to the page dealing only with information and issues in gifted education.

Austega's Gifted Services

<http://www.austega.com/gifted/>

Since 1995 Austega has built a rich collection of resources valuable to gifted children and their educators and parents/carers. Although this collection is no longer being actively maintained and some of the links don't work, many continue to find it useful, especially the articles on the Home Page.

Byrdseed

<http://www.byrdseed.com/>

Byrdseed is a place dedicated to differentiating instruction for high-level learners. Although its intended audience is teachers, there are many interesting and informative articles relevant to parents. There is a free monthly newsletter.

Clearing Skies

www.clearingskies.com.au

This website provides a range of professional services to nurture talent development and wellbeing within the gifted population.

Davidson Institute for Talent Development

<http://www.davidsongifted.org/>

The Davidson Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting profoundly gifted students, 18 years and under. Its mission is ".....to recognise, nurture and support profoundly intelligent young people and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents to make a positive difference." There are many useful free resources available.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Victoria launched a new Gifted and Talented Strategy in 2014

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/news/archive/Pages/giftedtalented.aspx>

Gifted and Talented

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/secondary/Pages/gifted.aspx>

This site is maintained by the Victorian Department of Education and provides detailed information about the education of gifted and talented students in Victoria.

European Council for High Ability

www.echa.info

ECHA provides courses in gifted education, reports on research and provides forums on different topics for teachers and parents. The refereed Journal of High Ability Studies is published twice a year. A conference is held every two years, alternating with the World Council on Gifted and Talented Children's conference.

Future Problem Solving Program Australia

www.fpsp.org.au/

The Future Problem Solving Program Australia is a year long program in which students learn to address complex scientific and social problems of the future through the use of a creative and comprehensive thinking process. The process challenges students to apply information they have acquired by research to some of the most complex issues facing society. They are asked to think, to make decisions and, in some instances, to carry out their solutions. The challenging thinking process used in the FPSPA is designed to motivate and assist students in:

- thinking creatively
- developing an active interest in the future
- improving communication skills (oral and written)
- solving problems using a six-step process
- working cooperatively in teams
- learning about complex social issues
- developing research skills
- and thinking critically and analytically.

GERRIC (2004)

<https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/gerric/resources/pd-package/>

In response to the findings of the 2001 Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee Report, the Australian Government commissioned the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) at the University of New South Wales to develop the Gifted Education Professional Development Package. CDs of the Package were delivered to every school in Australia 2005-2006 and are now available as an online resource.

The Package consists of six modules that focus on particular areas of Gifted Education:

- Module One *Understanding Giftedness*
- Module Two *The Identification of Gifted Students*
- Module Three *Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Students*
- Module Four *Underachievement in Gifted Students*
- Module Five *Curriculum Differentiation for Gifted Students*
- Module Six *Developing Programs and Provisions for Gifted Students*

Each of the six modules contain Core, Extension and Specialisation sections which in turn contain practical components, for example, case studies. All levels of schooling are covered in a variety of educational settings: Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary.

Although the Package is designed for teachers who wish to undertake professional development in Gifted Education, parents will find the Package informative and accessible. Plain language is used and the modules are illustrated with apt cartoons. Coloured icons throughout the modules allow quick identification of research, case studies, information and activities according to individual needs.

Gifted and Creative Services Australia

<http://www.giftedservices.com.au/links.html>

The authors of this site are Lesley Sword and David Harrison who are both Australians. Lesley has formal qualifications in psychology, education, consulting and counselling. She also has extensive training in the social and emotional development of the gifted and a deep interest in visual-spatial learners. David was a Primary Teacher before moving into other fields. There are links to key support agencies, the Australian State Departments of Education, and to information about gifted adults.

Gifted and Talented Children's Association of South Australia (GTCASA)

www.gtcasa.asn.au

Gifted Learning Disabled Australia

GLD Australia is a national online learning community responding to the needs of gifted children and gifted adults with specific learning disabilities and 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. GLD Australia is an independent community with a member-owned and member-operated closed Yahoo Group list. It is affiliated with the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT): <http://www.aaegt.net.au>, which is the Australian national umbrella association for State gifted associations.

Gifted Resources

<http://www.giftedresources.org/>

Gifted Resources is an information service for parents and teachers of gifted students and the service providers who cater for them. Among other services, there is a monthly email newsletter. The Film Discussion Series is an excellent resource for teachers looking to include Film Studies in their gifted programs – and it's free.

Habits of Mind

<http://www.habitsofmind.org/>

This website provides resources to support understanding of Art Costa's Habits of Mind. The site also provides information about the Habits of Mind resources available to educators and parents seeking assistance implementing Habits of Minds in classrooms and families. There is a whole section devoted to inspirational quotations that match each Habit of Mind.

Another related website is <http://www.mindfullybydesign.com/about-habits-mind>

Hoagie's Gifted Education Page

<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/readings.htm>

Information on this excellent site comes from the Davidson Institute for Talent Development. There are links to the many issues parents of gifted children continually have to deal with, to journals of gifted education, and to research on gifted students. All of the links have a short annotation. Motion pictures portraying gifted characters are listed alphabetically and annotated at <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/movies.htm>

Mindsets

<http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/flourishing-lives.php?&p=cGlkPTU2OA==>

This site contains excellent resources for parents and teachers on Professor Carol Dweck's Self-theories or Mindsets. The PowerPoints and accompanying notes are a standout.

Neag Centre for Gifted Education and Talent Development

<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/>

The National Research Centre for Gifted and Talented is based at the University of Connecticut, so it is no surprise that there are links to the work of Joe Renzulli and his School Wide Enrichment Model. However, there are also links to parent resources and to several gifted projects.

Self-Efficacy

<http://p20motivationlab.org/>

Please see the Theories section of the menu on the home page. This website contains a wealth of information about self-efficacy for parents and teachers alike. Professor Albert Bandura, Professor of Social Science in Psychology, Stanford University, appears to be the main guru in the self-efficacy field and his works are featured on this site. Other scientific papers related to the subject are presented, along with quotations, essays and whimsical items.

Another useful website is Professor Bandura's website:

<http://stanford.edu/dept/psychology/bandura/>

SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted Children) <http://www.sengifted.org/>

SENG is dedicated to fostering environments in which gifted adults and children, in all their diversity, understand and accept themselves and are understood, valued, nurtured, and supported by their families, schools, workplaces and communities. There are valuable resources for academics, teachers and parents, and more are added monthly.

Superkids <http://www.superkids.com/>

SuperKids reviews and rates educational software and the reviews are written by teams that include educators, parents, and children from across the United States. There is a list of bestselling software with prices. There are educational tools for parents and teachers to download in mathematics and vocabulary. In addition there are some logic, visual-spatial and critical thinking games that can be downloaded for free.

Thinking Ahead www.thinkingahead.com.au

Set up by a consultant in Western Australia, this website has a range of resources and practical tips for parents of gifted children.

Tournament of Minds <http://www.tom.edu.au/>

Tournament of Minds is a problem-solving program for teams of students from both primary and secondary years. They are required to solve demanding, open-ended challenges from one of the following disciplines; Applied Technology, Language Literature, Mathematics Engineering, and Social Sciences. Tournament of Minds is an opportunity for students with a passion for learning and problem solving to demonstrate their skills and talents in an exciting, vibrant, and public way.

Visual-Spatial Resource <http://www.visualspatial.org/>

Dr. Linda Silverman, who pioneered the concept of visual-spatial learners, is featured on this website which is specifically designed for parents and teachers of these children. There are e-books to download, articles to access, and practical suggestions about meeting the challenges involved in educating visual-spatial learners.

World Council for Gifted and Talented Children <http://www.world-gifted.org/>

The WCGTC is an international organisation for the gifted and talented. As such, it hosts a world conference every two years in different countries. It also publishes a refereed journal several times a year.

APPENDIX F: Useful contacts

Gifted and Talented Children's Association of South Australia

Website: <http://gtcasa.asn.au/>

Department of Education and Child Development (DECD)

31 Flinders Street,

Adelaide.

South Australia. 5000

Ph.: (08) 8226 1000

Website: www.decd.sa.gov.au

Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)

277 Unley Road,

Malvern.

South Australia. 5061.

Ph. (08) 8179 1400

Website: www.ais.sa.edu.au

Contact Janet Farrall

farrallj@ais.sa.edu.au

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA)

116 George Street,

Thebarton.

South Australia. 5031.

Ph. (08) 8301 6600

Website: <http://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/>

Policy for gifted students and guidelines for implementation available at

<http://online.cesonet.adl.catholic.edu.au/docushare/dsweb/View/Collection-360>

Lutheran Schools' Association (LSA)

137 Archer Street,

North Adelaide, SA 5006

Ph. (08) 8267 5565

Policy for gifted students available at

<http://www.lsa.lutheran.edu.au/files/f/4310/Gifted%20Education%20Policy%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20schools.pdf>

University courses in Gifted Education

Flinders University School of Education

Contact Lesley Henderson,

Ph. (08) 8201 3331

Email Lesley.henderson@flinders.edu.au

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