Gifted Children
meeting their needs

Dr Louise Porter
It is wishful thinking to suppose that hard-working teachers without sufficient content knowledge, without special knowledge of gifted children, without time to plan programs, and with limited assistance from supervisory personnel, will be able to alter the educational situation for gifted children to any meaningful degree.

Rogers (1989: 149)
Chapter 1
Identifying Giftedness

Definition of Giftedness
Giftedness simply means ‘significantly advanced’ development or learning. An advance is ‘significant’ when a child’s skills are in the top 3-5% of the population. This can be in any skill domain.

Domains of giftedness
- Intellectual
- Academic, in individual or many subjects
- Verbal
- Social skills
- Emotional intelligence
- Physical skills: gross or fine motor
- Artistic expression
- Music
Signs of Giftedness

Intellectual giftedness
- early achievement of developmental milestones (at least one-third sooner)
- quick learning
- keen observation of the environment
- quick and accurate recall
- memory for skills and information introduced some time ago
- deeper knowledge than other children
- early understanding of abstract concepts (e.g. death or time)

Academic giftedness
- read, write or use numbers in advanced ways
- can write words other than their own name before school entry (without formal teaching)
- show advanced preferences for books and movies (unless their themes are emotive)
- display advanced skills in one or more school subject

Verbal giftedness
- early comprehension
- advanced speech, in terms of vocabulary, grammar and clear articulation
- use of metaphors and analogies
- ability to invent stories or songs spontaneously
- ability to modify language for less mature companions
- use of language for a real exchange of ideas and information from an early age
- a sophisticated sense of humour

Emotional giftedness
- emotional sensitivity, intensity and responsiveness
- early appearance of fears
- early development of a self-concept and self-esteem
- self-confidence in their strong skill domains
- perfectionism, in the sense of striving for excellence
- over-sensitivity to criticism
- easily frustrated (particularly when their skill levels are uneven), leading to emotional outbursts
- accept responsibilities usually given to older children
- non-conformity
- for some, early spiritual awareness

Social giftedness
- highly developed empathy for others
- early development of moral reasoning and judgment
- intense interest in social justice
- advanced play interests and abilities
- early development of reciprocal friendships
- will select older playmates or adults or withdraw to solitary play if no intellectual peers are available
- are sought out by peers for their ideas and sense of fairness
- leadership skills
Learning styles
- alert, motivated, curious when challenged
- responsive to novel stimuli
- readily tire (habituate to) repetitive stimuli
- speedy and efficient information processing
- early use of metacognitive skills
- preference for challenge and complexity
- crave new ideas, challenges and experiences
- high motivation and curiosity in a search for understandings
- wide-ranging interests
- longer than usual concentration span on challenging topics of interest; conversely, inattention for activities that are not of interest
- an intense focus on and ability to immerse themselves in an area of interest in order to achieve deep understanding
- independence at challenging, non-routine tasks
- high self-efficacy
- willingness to take risks
- tolerance of ambiguity

Creative thinking style
- imagination
- creative problem solving
- application of intuition
- fluency, which reflects an ability to draw on a range or quantity of ideas
- flexibility, which refers both to the quality of ideas applied to a task and to skill at adapting their learning style to the task demands and goals
- being non-conforming and rejecting limits

Sequential

- 5%

Visual

- 25%

Verbal

- 65%

Holistic

Auditory-sequential style
- learn sequentially: one idea at a time
- analytical: able to break problems down into their parts
- attend well to details
- use rehearsal to remember
- learn well from verbal instructions
- can carry out instructions to perform several tasks in succession
- are logical, planful, organised
- are less impulsive than age mates
- have a clear understanding of cause-and-effect
- in school, achieve reasonably consistent grades across all subject areas

Conceptual (or holistic) style
- learn concepts all at once, as a whole
- synthesise (put together) ideas or concepts
- see the big picture; may miss details
- learn intuitively
- have ‘quirky’ organisational systems
- learn instantly and do not benefit from (and detest) rehearsal and repetition
- in school, achieve uneven grades across subject areas
- may be poor spellers and have difficulty learning to read phonetically
Differences between holistic learners and those with ADHD

**Holistic style**
- Have excellent attention on conceptual tasks but can be inattentive on sequential activities
- Have difficulty planning ahead on tasks with numerous steps
- Can apply themselves when the task is conceptual, meaningful and challenging
- Activity is focused and directed, although not always to the tasks that adults select

**ADHD**
- Have difficulty with focus and sustaining attention on both conceptual and sequential tasks
- Have difficulty planning ahead on tasks with numerous steps
- Have difficulties applying themselves to any tasks and in most circumstances
- Activity levels are excessive, task irrelevant and age – or developmentally – inappropriate across settings

Identification of intellectual giftedness

In the intellectual domain, ‘significantly’ advanced means:
- at least one-third ahead of age, or
- two standard deviations of more ahead of typical development, or
- an IQ of 130 or above (when the average is 100)

This is a conservative definition that defines 3-5% of the population as gifted. This means that, by definition, there are as many gifted learners as there are children with learning disabilities.

Parents’ reports

Parents see their children across time and situations and therefore have many opportunities to observe their performances. This equips them well as informants about their children’s abilities. However, well-educated parents are likely to underestimate their children’s abilities because:
- they are gifted themselves
- their other children are gifted
- their friends, children of friends, siblings and nieces and nephews are similarly gifted

Consequently, they think that their children’s abilities are more typical than is the case.

Teachers’ reports

At a higher rate than parents, teachers overlook giftedness, as found in one study (Gear 1976):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gifted learners correctly identified</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average learners incorrectly labelled as gifted</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In another (Ciha et al. 1974):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gifted learners correctly identified</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High SES gifted learners correctly identified</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle SES gifted learners correctly identified</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Teachers’ accuracy improves when:**
- they receive training in giftedness
- they have a checklist of characteristics to look for
- they offer activities with sufficient challenge for gifted children to display their advanced skills
- they have time to observe children’s performances
Calculating IQ: The ratio formula

\[ IQ = \frac{\text{mental age (MA)}}{\text{chronological age (CA)}} \times 100 \]

If a 6-year-old child is developing typically, his or her IQ will be:

\[ IQ = \frac{\text{MA (6 years)}}{\text{CA (6 years)}} \times 100 = 100 \]

If a 6-year-old child is developing one-third ahead of age, his or her IQ will be:

\[ IQ = \frac{\text{MA (8 years)}}{\text{CA (6 years)}} \times 100 = 130 \]

Assessment of intellectual giftedness

**IQ tests: Strengths**
- The tests are accurate at recognising intellectual giftedness
- The results reliably reflect children’s abilities at the time – that is, results tend to change 6-9 points over the course of childhood, and the more extreme a score, the more likely it is that it will remain within that realm for all of life
- Findings can clarify children’s skill patterns
- Tests allow some children with dual exceptionalities to be identified
- The results empower parents to advocate for their children’s needs
- Feedback to children allows them to understand their skills

**IQ tests: Weaknesses**
- Tests can under-estimate the abilities of children in educationally disadvantaging circumstances
- They can overlook the skills of children from non-dominant cultures
- Tests can under-estimate the abilities of children with unrelated difficulties e.g. poor eyesight, anxiety
- IQ tests do not assess creativity
- The findings are often reported in terms that are jargon-bound, unclear, or alarmist, which disempowers parents and teachers

**Reasons for discrepancies in assessment between sources**
- Teachers overlook giftedness
- Some gifted children disguise their giftedness at school
- The activities on offer are not challenging enough to engage the children or for them to display their sophisticated skills
- The children’s average fine motor skills (handwriting) impede their motivation or ability to record in writing what they have learned
- The children may be intellectually but not academically gifted
- They may be creatively or emotionally, but not academically, gifted
- The children learn holistically or visually, whereas teaching is done sequentially and auditorally

**Best ages to perform IQ tests**
- At any age when the information will allow parents or teachers to understand and therefore provide for the children’s additional educational needs
- If the child is nearing four years of age, it can be better to wait until after his or her fourth birthday as the test is more reliable after that age
- If the child is nearing six years of age, it can be better to wait until after his or her sixth birthday as the test for under six-year-olds may have too low a ceiling for the child’s abilities to show fully
- Test prior to ages 8-10 if possible, as older children can be anxious or embarrassed, particularly if they have endured repeated failure at school to date
Chapter 2

Emotional and social needs of gifted children

Issues for gifted children will depend on:

• the extent of their developmental advance: profoundly gifted children are statistically rare and consequently find it more difficult to locate intellectual peers than children whose skills are less advanced

• the domain in which they are advanced: it is more socially acceptable to be gifted at maths than verbally, while physical, musical and artistic skills are well regarded by all

• their learning style: given that an auditory-sequential style is the typical teaching method, students with alternative styles can be misunderstood as disruptive, unmotivated, disabled or not gifted

• their placement: students in gifted programs develop better social relationships, although some experience a decline in academic self-esteem (to realistic levels)

• their gender: gifted boys have higher physical and lower academic self-esteem than gifted girls; young gifted girls have higher academic self-esteem than young boys but girls’ self-esteem declines while boys’ improves throughout childhood

• their age: middle adolescents are subjected to more peer pressure to ‘be normal’ than are younger or older children and adolescents

• the presence of any additional needs: gifted children with disabilities can feel out of place among average learners, those with disabilities, and those who are gifted learners

There is a widespread misconception that gifted individuals are poorly adjusted emotionally. Over the decades, the slogans have changed, but the theme of disparaging the gifted is constant:

1920s Early ripe, early rot
1940s There’s s fine line between genius and insanity
1960s It’s all very well to be intelligent, but common sense is more important
1980s The intellect is less vital than emotional intelligence

However:

• Longitudinal research shows the opposite: gifted adults are well adjusted in themselves, their work and their relationships
• IQ is a measure of both intellectual skills and the ability to ‘hold it together’ emotionally; therefore, high IQ scores reflect both qualities
• The very abilities that create problems supply the solution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual age</th>
<th>Emotional age</th>
<th>Mental age</th>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2
Emotional and social needs of gifted children

Emotional adjustment

Even so:
• Although maladjustment is not caused by their giftedness as such, problems for the gifted can result from being misunderstood, dishonoured, and not having their needs met.
• Gifted individuals can suffer the same range of life traumas as any other people and will similarly need support during crises.
• Although ultimately gifted individuals will be well adjusted, during early childhood they can experience acute social isolation when they lack access to intellectual peers; while during mid-adolescence, their self-esteem can be threatened if they do not fit in with a peer group.

A model of human needs

Self-esteem of gifted children

Facets of self-esteem:
• Intellectual (or academic) skills
• Emotional wellbeing
• Social status
• Family (including ancestors)
• Physical skills

Routes to low self-esteem
• Individuals are aware that they cannot perform valued skills: their self-concept is accurate.
• Individuals have many skills and qualities but are not aware of them: their self-concept is impoverished.
• Individuals’ ideals are so inflated that no one could possibly achieve them all.

Self-concept
Gifted children develop early a sense of being different from their agemates. They will need an explanation for this perception; otherwise, they will surmise one of three reasons for the differences:
• There is something wrong with me.
• Other people are being stupid deliberately (to hurt my feelings or because they don’t like me, which means that there is something wrong with me).
• Other people are stupid; I am cleverer than everyone else.

Strategies to enhance self-concept
• Give gifted children an accurate explanation for their perceived differences from others:
  • Understanding that brains all work differently.
  • Awareness of their own learning style.
  • Appreciation that giftedness is incremental, not an entity.
  • Awareness of being statistically abnormal but psychologically normal at the same time.
• Validate their feelings.
• Meet their educational needs, as this honours who they are.
• Provide authentic and specific feedback about their achievements, giving them information about the skills and qualities they are exercising so that they learn about who they are.
Chapter 2
Emotional and social needs of gifted children

Guiding principles for delivering feedback
1. Children need coaches, not cheerleaders.
2. When you want children to develop a healthy self-esteem, do not praise them.
3. When you want children to develop a healthy self-esteem, acknowledge and celebrate (but do not praise) their efforts and successes.

Gifted children’s ideals
- Gifted children become aware that, while they (and sometimes their parents) value their gifts, their peers and teachers do not.
- Some develop punitively high expectations for themselves (dysfunctional perfectionism).

Types of perfectionism
- Self-referenced: individuals strive for high achievement because they know that they are capable of it. They judge their outcomes according to progress made in their own skill development.
- Socially-prescribed perfectionism: Individuals feel unworthy and believe that they have to prove otherwise by outdoing others or being perfect. They are anxious, procrastinate, have low self-efficacy, and low self-esteem.

Strategies to encourage realistic ideals:
- Teach self-referenced perfectionism so that a healthy perfectionism becomes the engine that drives children to high achievements.
- Teach a tolerance for uneven skill levels.
- Teach children to attribute failure to their strategy choice, rather than to themselves or their abilities.
- Guide them to adopt inspirational mottos.
- Cease delivering praise and other rewards for their achievements.

Teachings to promote realistic ideals:
- On worthwhile tasks, strive to do your best, not to be the best.
- Have the courage to be imperfect.
- Don’t let failure go to your head.
- Strive for excellence, not perfection.

Disadvantages of praise for children’s self-esteem
- Children can acquire socially-prescribed perfectionism from receiving praise (and other rewards) for high achievement.
- Children’s self-esteem is placed at risk by the implication that we approve of them only when they meet our standards.

Feedback needs to:
- Be authentic.
- Be specific: provides information, not a judgment.
- Focus on the process, not the product.
- Not patronise children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Praise</th>
<th>Acknowledgement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approves of work that meets adults’ standards</td>
<td>Guides children to evaluate their own efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges children or their efforts</td>
<td>Gives our opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occurs in public as a way to manipulate onlookers into copying a praised child</td>
<td>Is a personal event that does not show children up in public or compare them to each other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2
Emotional and social needs of gifted children

Social issues for gifted children

**Social issues**
- Gifted children will have a depth of relationships, but not necessarily a breadth
- If they lack intellectual peers, they will gravitate towards older children and adults for companionship
- When they have intellectual peers, they are able to develop reciprocal friendships from an early age
- The social behaviour of age mates can seem unjust, confusing or disappointing

**Social interventions**
- Having explained the reasons that they feel different from others, also emphasise the ways in which they are similar to their peers
- Distinguish popularity from friendship
- Explain that few people have more than one or two special friends
- Explain differences in degrees of friendship
- Provide at least part-time access to intellectual peers because social skills can be practised only within true peer relationships
- Support them to deal with loneliness
- Develop comfort with their introversion

Autonomy needs of gifted children

Autonomy is the need to be in command of our own lives, to steer our own course in life, to initiate our own actions, being the author of our own lives, making decisions for ourselves. To foster children’s autonomy:
- give them choice over their activities
- guide them to select their personal goals
- foster children’s self-efficacy with respect to their learning by teaching them to interpret failure as the need to change strategy, rather than as a reflection on themselves or their abilities
- teach them to control their own emotions by staying in command of their thinking
- use egalitarian discipline to guide their behaviour

Attribution training

Teach children to attribute the outcomes of their actions to:
- *internal* rather than external forces
- *temporary* rather than durable factors
- *specific* actions, rather than general inability
- *controllable*, rather than uncontrollable events

Dysfunctional thinking patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robot thinking</td>
<td>I can’t help it.</td>
<td>Feelings of failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m awful</td>
<td>Everything’s my fault.</td>
<td>Avoidance of risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You’re awful</td>
<td>Everything’s your fault.</td>
<td>Belligerence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairy tale thinking</td>
<td>It’s not fair.</td>
<td>Hurt, anger, helplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wussy (defeatist) thinking</td>
<td>I can’t stand it.</td>
<td>Anxiety, shyness, over-reaction to threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doomsday thinking</td>
<td>Things are always awful. They’ll never get any better.</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Guide children to challenge their dysfunctional thinking by asking:
- Is this thinking keeping me alive?
- Does it help me to feel better?
- Is it based on reality?
- Does this thinking help me to get along with others?
- Does it help me to reach my goals?

Follow up by teaching them more productive thinking patterns, which do not contain victim words such as should, should not, ought, have to, can’t, must, or must not.
Chapter 2
Emotional and social needs of gifted children

Behaviours
When their needs are honoured, gifted children:
• have a lower rate of behavioural disruptions than agemates
• can anticipate the outcomes of their actions
• are less impulsive and more careful than agemates
• have a strong sense of justice and empathy with others and therefore understand how their actions affect other people

However, gifted children can have some behavioural challenges:
• they might clown around in class to entertain themselves, to court favour with amused peers, or to demonstrate that they are ‘one of the crowd’
• they are non-conformist
• they will feel insulted and react with outrage at the injustice of being told what to think or do
• they may see themselves as the intellectual peers of adults and will reject adult authority over them
• many negotiate adult directives tirelessly
• they may have frustrated emotional outbursts that belie their intellectual and emotional maturity

Self-fulfilment and gifted children
Self-fulfilment refers to the drive for long-term growth towards an ideal or higher version of ourselves. It is our need to fulfill our mission in life, to live out our life script or to obey our ‘sealed orders’.

Gifted children are no more obliged than any others to ‘reach their potential’; moreover, there is no way to assess potential or if someone has achieved it. The impossible quest places them, their parents and teachers under undue pressure. Moreover, ‘meeting potential’ is valuable only insofar as it is self-fulfilling.

• be aware that your children are not here to fulfill your personal ambitions
• give children permission to fulfill their own mission in life
• provide career guidance

Career guidance
• Gifted students will begin to consider their career options earlier than others and, by late primary school, can need some career counselling.

• They will often set their sights on careers that require detailed planning and a lengthy education.

• This can mean that their stamina needs to be safeguarded by protecting personal time – from the intrusion of homework, for example.

• They need advice that their career choice will reflect their abilities, interests and values.

• They will need guidance to select careers that are self-fulfilling, rather than high in status.

Fun
Fun is the ‘intangible joy’ that we feel when our lower-order needs are met (Glasser, 1988, p. 30). Hence, the main way to meet children’s need for fun is to ensure that what they are being asked to do is affirming (fosters a healthy self-esteem), meets their social needs (to belong) and is freely chosen (safeguards their autonomy).

• ensure that children are not pressured to achieve
• give them ample time for unstructured activities
Chapter 3
Educational provisions for gifted children

Attitudes to gifted education

Prejudice
- Gifted children are given special provisions when they ‘deserve’ them, whereas in special education, children with learning difficulties receive special provisions when they need them.
- Many teachers are indifferent to or even actively hostile towards gifted learners.
- There is a confusion between the right to equal development, and the equal right to develop.

Myths
- Many adults are reluctant to assess children’s skills on the grounds that this will distort the children’s emotional development.
- The concept of ‘multiple intelligences’ has been misinterpreted to imply that everyone is gifted at something and therefore no one needs special provisions.
- Some believe that, as gifted children are already learning at advanced levels without extra support, they will continue to do so.

Priorities
- Many believe that, although giftedness is a priority, it cannot be provided for until all children with learning difficulties are being catered for.
- Some argue the opposite: that gifted children are a national resource to be treasured and therefore deserve educational adjustments.
- Some believe that gifted children will not ‘reach their potential’ unless they receive gifted provisions.

Special education rationale
- This rationale accepts that, as is the case for many children who have disabilities, the needs of some gifted learners are not routinely being met in regular classrooms and therefore these children require additional provisions.

Thus, the aim of differentiating the curriculum for gifted learners is to meet their needs as these are manifested now, regardless of how the children might develop in future.
Chapter 3
Educational provisions for gifted children

Issues for gifted learners

Boredom
Gifted learners can be intolerant of not being allowed to use their brain and may disengage or become disruptive if the work is not challenging enough for them.
- ensure that tasks provide optimum challenge
- explain the rationale for the task
- highlight how the task will help to meet their needs
- allow them to proceed at a quicker pace

Holistic (conceptual) learners
Conceptual learners find it difficult to learn sequentially but instead need to see the ‘big picture’. Their learning style may not match the typical teaching style, which can lead to accusations that they are not gifted after all, have learning difficulties, or are not applying themselves (are ‘lazy’).
- ground detail in the big picture
- keep demands for repetition and rote learning to a minimum
- reduce the written workload

Confronting challenge
Gifted learners may not find the content of their learning challenging until the first years of school, of high school, or of university. Because they think so quickly, they may not be aware of the processes that they use to learn. Therefore, when they first encounter challenge, they may believe that they have ‘got dumber’ and must therefore accept that they can no longer achieve at high levels.
- highlight the learning processes that they use

Curriculum differentiation
As is true for special education, any particular intervention may or may not be relevant or appropriate for an individual gifted learner. There is no ‘one size fits all’ prescription for gifted education. Nevertheless, four aspects of teaching can be adjusted: the learning environment, teaching and learning processes, curricular content and products.

Environmental adjustments
The main environmental adjustment is to supply a developmentally appropriate placement. The first way to achieve this is through ‘acceleration’, which refers to early entry to school, grade skipping or subject skipping. Pull-out extension programs, in class enrichment and ability grouping are other means to provide appropriate placements.

1 Acceleration
The aims of acceleration are:
- Academic: avoid boredom (along with any resultant motivational and behavioural difficulties), promote good study habits, to capitalise on children’s interest and motivation
- Social: giving students access to intellectual peers who share their advanced interests and abilities
- Emotional: validating the child as a gifted learner

Perseverance
Gifted learners can be one-trial learners and therefore are not accustomed to sustaining attention on one activity. When they cannot learn instantly, they often assume that they are not capable at that task, and give up.
- teach the difference between learning and practicing
- explain that some skills cannot be learned instantly but are incremental

Imposter syndrome
Gifted learners often believe that they achieve well ‘by fluke’ and fear that one day others will discover that they are not really smart after all.
- explain about their style of giftedness
- remind them that their giftedness is real, even when some others are smarter than them

Perfectionism
Parents and teachers can often assume that gifted learners will be equally capable at everything and therefore that any poor school result is a sign of ‘laziness’. External pressure to achieve will at everything when they have specific gifts can instil in children socially-prescribed perfectionism.
- become familiar with their profile of giftedness
- accept – and help them to accept – their uneven skill levels
- deliver informative feedback that focuses on their personal progress, rather than judging or comparing them to others

Its effects are:
- Academic: double the academic gains achieved by in-class enrichment, although students may still require extension even after grade or subject skipping
- Social: most students who have been grade-skipped or who enter school early adjust well socially (sometimes after initial awkwardness) and report that they prefer to be with their older classmates
- Emotional: acceleration may make no difference to children’s overall emotional adjustment (causing neither an improvement nor a decline); although exceptionally gifted learners suffer from being held back
- Early exit: the resulting early exit from school is not a problem: accelerants continue to do well into university and beyond
Essential criteria for acceleration

- The principal has to be willing
- The receiving teacher has to be willing, and to be open to filling any gaps in the child’s knowledge and skills caused by missing some curricular content and supporting the child emotionally and socially
- The parents have to be willing
- The child has to be willing
- The child’s skills should fall within the top third of the receiving class
- The child needs at least age-appropriate academic skills in reading and writing

Desirable criteria for acceleration

- The child has to be socially and emotionally mature enough to socialise with older classmates
- It helps if the child is not small for age
- For early entry to school, the child needs the stamina to cope with a full day (although not necessarily a full week)
- It is best to time acceleration at natural transition points if possible
- Acceleration has to be a common enough practice within the school that accelerants are not stigmatised socially or feel abnormal, and teachers are familiar with the kind of support they may need

2 Pull-out extension programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The children will be spending time with a teacher who is vitally interested in able learners</td>
<td>Sessions can be sporadic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They can receive activities that inspire engagement</td>
<td>It is difficult to integrate the content of pull-out sessions with the regular curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension activities can instigate self-selected, self-initiated, independent learning</td>
<td>In the children’s absence from the classroom, the regular teacher cannot teach something vital, lest they miss it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of their gifts can enhance the children’s self-esteem</td>
<td>Knowing that the child is receiving enrichment in the pull-out program can excuse the regular teacher from making any routine curricular adjustments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to engage with intellectual peers can reduce their social isolation</td>
<td>The children are gifted all the time, not only during pull-out sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For cultural or social reasons, some children will not want to be singled out and therefore refuse to attend</td>
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3 In-class enrichment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children do not have to be singled out as gifted</td>
<td>Teachers are seldom trained to offer appropriate enrichment or extension to gifted learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their learning is integrated into a coherent whole</td>
<td>Doing so is particularly demanding when there is a wide spread of abilities within the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children’s full inclusion models acceptance of diversity</td>
<td>If teaching is not truly enriched, gifted children can be frustrated at the slow pace of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The classroom is not disrupted by their exit</td>
<td>Gifted learners in regular classrooms often suffer the ‘Robin Hood’ effect of having instruction denied them while less able children receive teacher attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifted children can lack intellectual peers within a same-aged cohort</td>
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Educational provisions for gifted children

4 Within-class ability grouping

**Strengths**

- Ability grouping gives gifted learners access to high quality interaction with intellectual peers
- Working with intellectual peers improves gifted children's achievement, attitude to learning, social skills and self-esteem
- Students in the less able groupings do not experience any decline in achievement or self-esteem
- Breaking into groups does not disrupt classroom processes, as is the case for withdrawal (pull-out) sessions
- In collaborative tasks, ability grouping can minimise both free riding by less able students and dominance by able students that can often occur with mixed-ability grouping

**Weaknesses**

- Some object to ability grouping on the grounds that it discriminates in favour of the more able students. This is true only of streaming, however.
- Groupings must vary according to the nature of the task; otherwise groups can become competitive with each other
- For cooperative activities, group learning is best suited to tasks that call for open-ended conceptual learning; otherwise gifted learners can be more efficient when working alone
- When using ability grouping for cooperative tasks, students need training in collaborative social skills

**Teaching and learning adjustments**

- Mediate children's learning: assisting their focus, explain the meaning, expansion of their understandings, provide feedback and help their organisation
- Teach and guide their use of metacognitive skills, particularly planning: Where are you going to start?...What are you going to do next?...Is it working?...What else could you do?...Have you finished?
- Allot time flexibly
- Highlight (using informative feedback) the skills and learning processes that the children are employing
- Expose children to higher-order thinking activities
- Safeguard their motivation
- Encourage learning dispositions

**Motivation**

With gifted children, the educational issue is not enhancing their motivation, as they are already driven to use their skills – but of not depleting their motivation.

**Signs of declining motivation**

'Bright but bored' students will engage in many tactics to enliven their learning and entertain themselves if the setting is not providing adequate challenge:

- clowning
- performing other tasks while didactic teaching is occurring
- sleeping in class
- making jokes
- appearing not to be paying attention and yet can answer the teacher's questions
- asking conceptual questions to raise the level of class discussion
- despite being disruptive, they still achieve well

**Types of motivation**

1. Performance goals: this is seeking to excel compared with others. It comes in two forms:
   - Approach: exaggerated competitiveness in order to outdo others
   - Avoidance: to preserve their dignity in the face of impending failure, students will give up, avoid challenge, become off-task and become disruptive

2. Mastery orientation: effort is motivated by a desire to become more competent

**Disadvantages of rewards for motivation**

Praise, school awards, merit certificates, prizes, bonus pocket money, special treats, school grades – in short, rewards – produce declining motivation:

- children who anticipate earning a reward continue to put in effort but, once they assess that a reward is unlikely, their engagement, effort and performance decline
- rewards encourage a performance orientation to learning rather than a mastery orientation
- rewards foster more negative emotional reactions and helpless responses to failure
- rewards produce socially-referenced (that is, a dysfunctional form of) perfectionism

**Learning dispositions**

- Creative skills: imagination, openness to new ideas, tolerance of ambiguity, curiosity, exploration, adventurousness, playfulness
- Reflective skills: metacognitive strategies (self-monitoring, self-regulation, and feedback to self), impulse control
- Critical skills: planning, investigating, thinking logically
- Emotional skills: enthusiasm, engagement, patience, persistence, independence, cooperativeness, delay of gratification, emotional self-control
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Adjustments to curricular content
- Respond to children’s interests
- Tailor activities, adjusting on the dimensions of:
  - simple vs complex
  - concrete vs abstract
  - large vs small leaps
  - knowledge acquisition vs concept mastery
  - unidimensional vs multifaceted concepts
  - structured vs open-ended tasks
  - breadth vs depth
- Provide tiered activities:
  - differentiated inputs: where children engage in different activities on a common theme, with the level of sophistication of the tasks matched to their abilities
  - differentiated outcomes, where students apply themselves to the same task, but select their level of challenge, according to their abilities

Calculating developmental level
If a 6 year old child was assessed two years ago (at age 4) to have an IQ of 150, you can calculate his or her present developmental level using the ratio formula:

Mental age = Chronological age x IQ%
= 6 years x 150%
= 9 years

Differentiation of products
Allow students to produce evidence of their learning in forms other than writing, for example: movies, photographs, drama productions, computer presentations, art, craft, music, verbal presentations, constructions.

Gifted children with learning disabilities

Three types
- Those whose disabilities are recognised, but their giftedness is overlooked
- Those whose giftedness is recognised, while their disabilities are attributed to ‘laziness’ or a lack of motivation
- Those whose giftedness allows them to disguise their learning difficulties, while their disabilities suppress their gifted output, with the result that both their gifts and difficulties are overlooked

Characteristics
Gifted-learning disabled students are gifted at intellectual processing but some academic skills are below age level:
- an intellectual style resembling other gifted children
- in terms of content, may be able at maths but poor at language/arts or vice versa
- evidence difficulties with spelling and handwriting
- their speaking vocabulary exceeds written expression

Emotional qualities
- have fragile self-esteem (arising from uneven skill levels)
- are confused about their abilities
- are highly sensitive to criticism
- feel academically inept
- impose unrealistic self-expectations
- experience strong anxiety or fear of academic failure
- do not achieve well under pressure e.g. timed tasks
- feel different from others

Behaviours
- disruptive in class
- are often off-task
- are disorganised, especially when unmotivated
- may act impulsively without considering outcomes
- may be aggressive
- are often withdrawn socially
- display poor social skills with peers and adults
- experience fatigue from the effort needed to mask their learning difficulties

Educational adjustments
Gifted-learning disabled students need an educational intervention with four facets:
- adjustments to their setting, teaching and learning processes, curricular content and products in recognition of their gifts
- remediation for their academic weaknesses, often in literacy, maths, metacognitive and organisational skills
- permission to record their learning in non-written form
- emotional and social support
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Collaboration between parents and teachers

Needs of parents

• Knowledge
  • knowledge of giftedness in general
  • understanding of the particular manifestations of giftedness in their child
  • awareness of any social and emotional implications of the giftedness for their child

• Personal adjustment
  • recognition of their own giftedness
  • resolution of their sadness at their own life history
  • awareness of their own skills for meeting their child’s needs
  • support within the school community, as otherwise they can be isolated, particularly those from minority or stigmatised cultures

• Family adjustment
  • explaining giftedness to the gifted child and siblings
  • continued insistence on considerate behaviour, rather than making undue allowances for a gifted child or, conversely, placing the child under extra pressure to perform

Parents’ role

• Be clear that you are not asking for a better education for your gifted child but simply a developmentally appropriate one

• Document your child’s genuine achievements, as teachers may not see these performances at school

• Recognise that, like you, teachers are uncertain about how to meet the needs of gifted learners

• Realise that teachers experience constraints on best practice

• Form alliances with other parents of gifted children to advocate jointly for their needs and to raise funds for supplementary resources

Teachers’ role

• Adopt a parent-driven style of collaboration: parents are the experts about their children and family, know their aspirations for their children and employ you to assist them in raising skilled, well-adjusted children

• Respect parents’ assessment of their child’s skills

• Recognise that you both want what is best for their child

• Gain knowledge about giftedness and best practice

• Acknowledge the constraints under which you are functioning

• Plan with parents how to overcome gaps in services
Further resources

General background texts on giftedness

Texts on programming for young gifted learners

Texts on gifted education at high school

Further resources

Texts on social and emotional issues relevant to gifted children
Delisle, J. & Galbraith, J. (2002). When gifted kids don't have all the answers: How to meet their social and emotional needs. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press.

Texts on learning differences

Texts on collaboration in schools
(with a chapter on collaborating with parents of gifted learners)

Websites
Follow the links with a click if you are reading this on screen as a pdf.
Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Centre: gerric.arts.unsw.edu.au
Hawker Brownlow website: www.hbe.com.au
Linda Silverman’s website: gifteddevelopment.com
Louise Porter’s website: www.louiseporter.com.au
Virtual school for the Gifted: www.vsg.com.au

Texts on behavioural guidance