

Frequently Asked Questions

from parents of gifted and high ability children

How to Use This Resource

Welcome to this selection of frequently asked questions from parents (and grandparents) of gifted and high ability children. The questions were asked during seminars delivered by VAGTC for parents over several years up to 2021. The resource is designed to be one that you can dip into depending on your need or curiosity. But feel free to read the whole collection as a book.

- **Definitions of words (glossary)** - some definitions of specialist terms used are included at the end of each section. These words are often highlighted in blue in the answers to questions.
- **Links to related questions** - As many issues and questions are related to one another, we have included links to other questions within the resource that you may be interested in.
- **Links to further reading and related topics** - At the end of each section, there are links to resources and further reading. Some text based references are also listed.

VAGTC intends to update and add to this resource in the future; reader suggestions or feedback are welcome! Please contact info@vagtc.org.au.

The Team

This resource exists thanks to the contributions of a wide variety of individuals across a number of organisations. We acknowledge the input of the many parents and educators who contributed their questions and sought extra explanations where necessary. We extend our gratitude to the parents and families who tested the resource for accuracy, readability and helpfulness. Suggestions and feedback from the Student Excellence Unit of DET was greatly valued.

Project Coordinator: Kathy Harrison

Writers: Dr Susan Nikakis, Dr Anna Pollard

Editor: Amy Horneman

©2021 Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children

Distribution permitted under acknowledgement of VAGTC's rights to the publication in its entirety

2/3 Wellington Street, Kew, Victoria, 3101

www.FaceBook.com/VAGTC, Twitter @VicAGTC, www.VAGTC.org.au

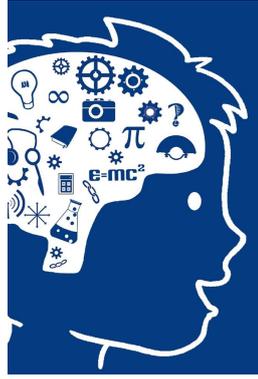
Forward

VAGTC has run many series of parent and educator seminars in partnership with the Department of Education and Training Victoria over the last 5 years. Throughout this time, it has become apparent that a parent resource to support parents of gifted and high ability children was desperately needed. Everyday parents of gifted and high ability children are faced with new challenges. Navigating these challenges raises many questions, questions with wide, varied and often complex answers. This *Frequently Asked Questions* resource is the outcome of these ideas, challenges and thinking. It is also a response to the many questions that parents have asked at VAGTC parent seminars in recent years.

I thank the Department of Education and Training for their generous support and input during the compilation of this resource. Thanks also to the parents, Jeff Segal, Lauren Segal, and Carolynne Cormack who reviewed the resource upon completion, providing valuable input and feedback. I would also like to acknowledge the writers, Dr Anna Pollard and Dr Susan Nikakis for their research and expertise, and the Chief Editor, Mrs Amy Horneman for her analysis, insights and responses to departmental and parent feedback. Many thanks also to Ms Kathy Harrison, current VAGTC president, who coordinated the writing process over many months from planning and commencement to conclusion and publication.

I hope that this resource delivers useful assistance to the many parents of gifted and high ability children across Victoria. We look forward to developing subsequent editions of *Frequently Asked Questions* and would welcome any reader feedback.

Mr Mark Smith
VAGTC President (2018-2021)



Contents

1) How do I know my child is gifted?

- a) Isn't everyone gifted?
- b) Is there a definition of 'gifted'?
- c) So how do I know if my child is gifted?
- d) Do all gifted children think and behave in the same way?
- e) Are the common myths about gifted children true?
- f) What is the difference between 'gifted', 'highly able', and 'talented'?
- g) What percentage of the population is gifted?
- h) Is the negative stigma associated with using the word *gifted* mainly an Australian school system problem or do you see it in other countries too?
- i) Will teachers at my school know how to identify my gifted child?
- j) What are some options available to me and to the school for identifying giftedness in my child?
- k) What are the differences between teacher assessment of my child and the intelligence tests administered by psychologists?
- l) What if I can't afford a WISC V or other IQ assessment for my child?
- m) Where can I go to get my child assessed and what does it cost?
- n) Why is my child's processing speed low according to the WISC V? What can we do to help him?
- o) My child has been assessed as gifted. Will her brothers and sisters also be gifted?

2) What are the joys, opportunities and challenges of parenting a gifted child?

- a) What are some of the joys of parenting a gifted child?
- b) What are some of the challenges of parenting a gifted child?
- c) What can I do to help my child be happy at school?
- d) Why does my child tend to choose easy work at school?
- e) My gifted child is a high achiever and has high expectations of herself that may be unrealistic or unattainable. How can I help my child deal with this challenge?
- f) How do I get my child to stop thinking they have to do everything perfectly/first time?

- g) Why does my child have sophisticated ideas in some areas, but seem like a little child emotionally?
- h) Is it normal for my child to sometimes get so intense or 'overexcited' that they have meltdowns?
- i) How can I support my high ability child who just started senior school and has strong perfectionistic tendencies, knowing that the pressure is going to increase even more in VCE/VCAL/IB?

3) What can be done at school to ensure my child's needs are being met?

- a) How are gifted and high ability children catered for in the regular classroom?
- b) Will my child need a special program at school?
- c) What is the Victorian High Ability Program (VHAP)?
- d) What is curriculum compacting?
- e) What is acceleration?
- f) Should my child be accelerated?
- g) Is it OK for my child to be mixing with other older students if she/he is accelerated?
- h) Does my gifted child need to be withdrawn from regular classes?
- i) Should my child be placed in a streamed classroom?
- j) What is differentiation of the curriculum?
- k) What enrichment programs could be offered to my child at school?
- l) Is early school entry a bad thing? I have heard that it is better for kids to start school later – 6 or older.
- m) Can my child begin school earlier than the set date in Victoria?
- n) What do I do if my child becomes disengaged and does not want to be at school?
- o) Will being identified as gifted cause my child to be teased or rejected by other students?
- p) My child is performing far below his ability at school. What can I do to help?
- q) Are teachers trained to provide for my gifted child?
- r) Is it a good idea to allow my older child to advance into content which might overlap with VCE material?
- s) What is the difference between the terms ILP/IEP/PLP/SSG/PSG/LSG?
- t) What will a PSG/ILP do to help my child?
- u) What involvement should I have in the school/ my child's ILP?
- v) How will my child's giftedness be catered for if her/his abilities are in areas other than the academic fields?
- w) At what age should gifted children be encouraged to study a musical instrument?
- x) How do we get our gifted child accepted into a school for gifted and high ability children if there is not one in our school zoned area?
- y) Do you have any tips for high ability students who shy away from challenges? My son tends to choose easy things and fool around, even though he is capable of much more challenge.

4) How do I communicate with my child's school?

- a) Is it OK to speak up for my gifted child?
- b) I am keen on working cooperatively with my child's teacher/s. What advice can you give me?
- c) What do I need to know when talking to my child's teachers?
- d) How can I collaborate with my child's teachers to build my child's self-esteem and resilience?
- e) Does it sound like bragging if I tell teachers what my child can do?
- f) What evidence can I provide to the school to show my child is gifted?
- g) Will my child succeed at school without help or special programs?
- h) My child says that he would like more challenging school work. What can I do?
- i) Why is my child not showing teachers at school what they can really do?
- j) How will I know if the school is the right one for my child?
- k) How can I support my child's school to offer the best possible program?

5) What can I do at home to support my gifted child?

- a) How can I create a supportive environment at home?
- b) What can I do at home to help my child to be the best they can be?
- c) How can I help my child to become more independent?
- d) How can I help my child to develop their social skills?
- e) What do I do about my child's meltdowns?
- f) How do I support my child's development when they seem to be good at everything?
- g) My child has so many things on the go that the house is always a junk heap. What should I do?
- h) What out of school programs should my child do?
- i) Should I be sending my child to extra tutoring?
- j) I learned Mathematics in another country, and I am not sure whether I should help my child with Mathematics at home because Mathematics is different in English, and they do things differently in Australian schools.
- k) How do I help my child with career guidance?

6) What if my child is gifted but also has a disability or challenges of some other sort?

- a) What is Twice or Dual Exceptionality?
- b) What are some ideas for what can be done at school to help my 2e child thrive?
- c) How can I help both my child and the teachers/staff, so that my child can have success at school?
- d) What could an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) look like for my 2e child?
- e) What might be some of the reasons that my gifted 2e child is not succeeding at school?

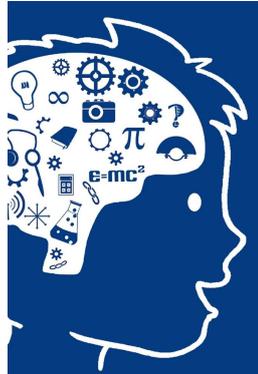
- f) My child is really intense – is this a sign of autism or ADHD, or is this normal for gifted children?
- g) I know my child is gifted in at least one area, so why have they been put in the low ability or remedial class?

7) Where do I find other parents of gifted children?

- a) What are the benefits to parents in belonging to a gifted network?
- b) Where can I find other parents of gifted children?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------

Frequently Asked Questions



1 How do I know my child is gifted?

All children are gifts

All children have gifts

Not all children are gifted

a Isn't everyone gifted?

All children are certainly gifts to their parents. We aim to help our children to understand themselves so that they can keep growing and learning. Sometimes that is at a different rate and in a different way to other children of their age. If you look at the definition below it may make the term *gifted* easier to understand.

b Is there a definition of 'gifted'?

Gifted children come from all walks of life, no matter what cultural or racial group they belong to. Sometimes people use the terms **high ability**, **highly able** or **high potential** to describe gifted children.

There is no single definition of giftedness accepted by all people, but in Australia a very popular definition comes from Canadian psychologist François Gagné. He has developed a theoretical model which defines 'gifts' as *untrained abilities* a person naturally has. Giftedness means someone has these natural abilities or natural potential which place them in the top 10% of ability in the population in that particular area or category. With learning, practice and training, these abilities can be developed into talents. In other words, *giftedness* refers to the potential that a person has to learn quickly so that they can go on to develop *talents*.

Giftedness can be placed broadly in the following categories:

- **Academic:** This used to be the only area which people considered when using the term *gifted*. It applies to reading, mathematics, science and history understood at very advanced levels. Typically, children would be working a couple of years ahead of same- or similar-aged peers, but sometimes academic giftedness can be hidden by learning difficulties or other challenges. *Related questions:* [What if my child is gifted but also has a disability or other challenges?](#)
- **Creative and Artistic:** This applies to children who demonstrate advanced skills in visual or performance art. Painting, drawing, sculpting, drama and dancing are some examples.
- **Leadership:** This is evident in areas where children can take the lead in games, group work or classroom organisation.
- **Sport:** This area is probably the most obvious display of giftedness, with success in sport and other physical activities usually obvious. Running, jumping and swimming are examples.

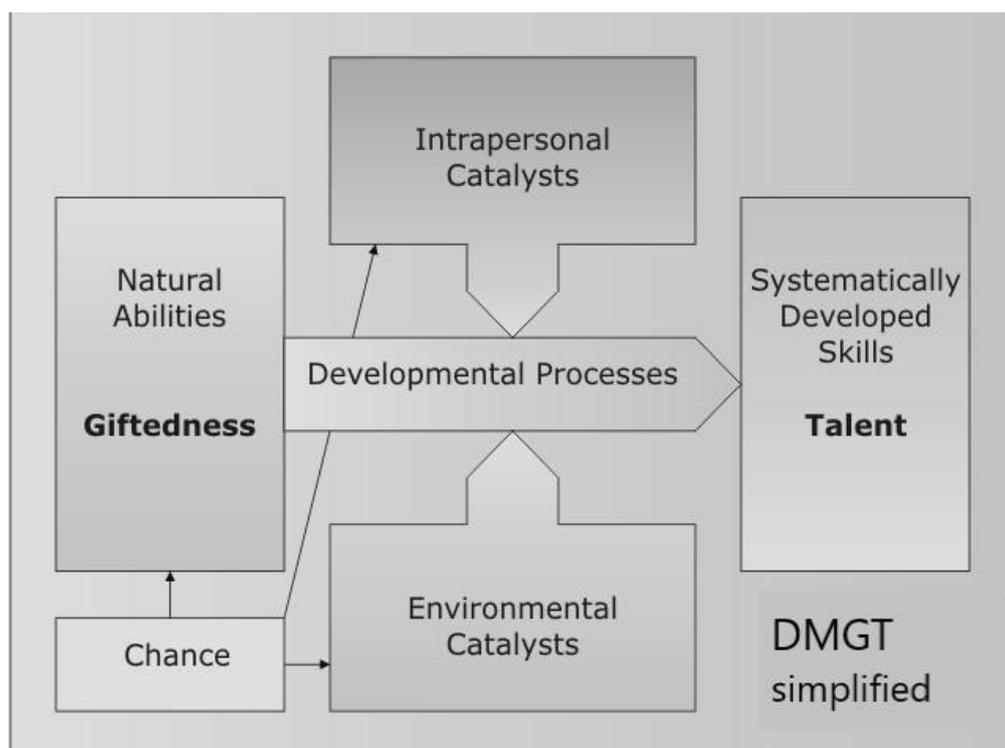


Image: Gagné's Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent
https://www.gigers.com/matthias/gifted/gagne_dmgt.html

Related questions: [What is the difference between 'gifted', 'highly able', and 'talented'?](#), [What percentage of the population is gifted?](#)

c So how do I know if my child is gifted?

The most obvious signs of giftedness in any area are that your child:

- learns quickly
- can make connections
- knows how to apply what they are learning to new situations
- can deal with complex ideas or skills in that area

Learning quickly means that where most people would need to practice and repeat a skill many times to learn it, a gifted person would only need to repeat it a couple of times. They may be able to transfer skills easily, for example, the child who has learnt to play one musical instrument but then picks up other unfamiliar instruments and knows how to reach proficiency quickly.

Making connections can be that your very young child can understand that the hose and running water can be connected, or that a bucket and spade may mean a trip to the beach. Your much older child might easily make connections between one chemistry equation and something they are reading in a history book.

Gifted children often reach common milestones like talking, walking, learning to read earlier than other children. Older children may need more complexity at school as they learn easily and do not require a great deal of repetition.

You also may suspect that your child is gifted if they are showing outstanding ability in one or more areas. The following list contains some other characteristics that you might observe in your child. No child will have all of these characteristics, but they are a good guide. Your child might:

- Learn rapidly
- Have an extensive vocabulary
- Have an excellent memory
- Reason well
- Show a great deal of curiosity
- Be mature for their age
- Have a well developed sense of humor
- Have keen observation skills
- Show compassion for others
- Have a vivid imagination
- Have a long attention span

Have strong ability with numbers
Be concerned with justice and fairness
Have a great deal of sensitivity
Have a wide range of interests
Show strong ability with and interest in puzzles
Have high energy levels
Struggle with perfectionism
Show perseverance in areas of interest
Question authority
Be an avid reader
Prefer older companions

Characteristics of Giftedness Scale: Linda Kreger Silverman

Resources: [Characteristics Checklists](#)

d Do all gifted children think or behave in the same way?

Gifted children are as diverse as any children in the general population. It is important to treat your child as an individual and respond to their individual ways of thinking and feeling, rather than try to construct a stereotypical gifted child.

There are, however, some categories that have been identified that help us to understand and support different people better. This diagram outlines some of those categories:



In Gifted Seminars 2016

- A **gifted visual-spatial thinker** is a child who is good with puzzles and patterns in words or numbers.
- A **domain specific gift** shows itself in one area, for example Mathematics, Music, painting or dress designing.
- A **creatively gifted learner** is a child who has a very high natural ability in creating things or ideas. They show originality and flexibility in the way they think and are open to new experiences and ideas. They are curious and willing to take risks. Some of the great geniuses of the world have been creatively gifted.
- A **young gifted child** is a toddler or very young child who is keenly aware of their surroundings and understands and interacts with the world like a much older child. These young gifted children usually learn to talk at an early age and understand sophisticated concepts.
- A **2e child** is a child who has more than one 'exceptionality': they are gifted in some way and also have one or more areas of significant challenge. This could be in the form of a physical disability; a diagnosis that causes learning challenges, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, autism or ADHD; or psychological challenges such as anxiety and depression. 2e can be called '**twice exceptional**', '**dual exceptional**' or '**doubly exceptional**' ([definition](#)). *Related question: [What is twice or doubly exceptional?](#)*
- **Ethno-cultural diversity** in gifted children means that a child may come from a culture where giftedness may be defined another way. Sometimes what is seen as gifted in one culture is not recognised in a different culture.

- A **gifted underachiever** is a gifted child who is not achieving what they are capable of. Something is stopping them from being the best they can be. *Related question:* [My child is performing far below his ability at school. What can I do to help?](#)

e Are the common myths about gifted children true?

There are many myths that have been around for a long time about gifted children. Some of these myths are answered below:

- ***Gifted children already 'get it' so they don't require any help.***

All children need to be taught at their level so they can fulfill their potential. A gifted child is not born knowing everything and needs to learn, even if it is at a very fast pace. Your child needs to be provided with stimulating learning experiences, at school, home and everywhere.

- ***Harder work is not good for children.***

A bored child is not going to flourish. They need to be provided with learning experiences that will provide enough stimulation and challenge for them to develop new knowledge and skills. This could be at school, home, or even at the supermarket.

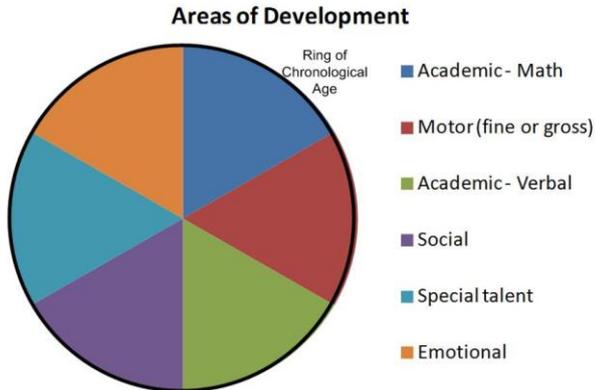
- ***Gifted education is elitist.***

All children deserve to have access to learning experiences at levels which help them learn. Matching a child with an effective learning environment is simply honouring who they are as a unique individual by allowing them to learn at a pace, depth and complexity that suits them and how they learn.

- ***Gifted children are gifted in everything.***

Many gifted children are only gifted in one or two areas. [Uneven \(or asynchronous\) development](#) is common across all individuals in our societies. Gifted children can show more drastically uneven development than other children their age, because they might show very advanced achievement in one area like Maths, and have great difficulties in other areas, like social relationships. The gap between the area of giftedness and the area of challenge can be very wide.

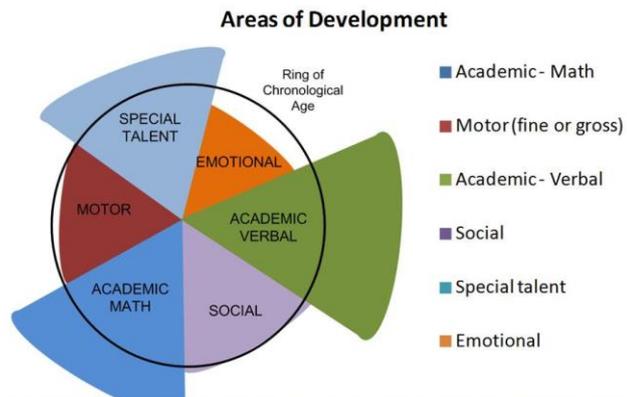
Typical Child Development



Imagine the rings of a tree's trunk. The outer-most ring tells us the chronological age of the tree. Using similar imagery, this circle, with its pie shaped sections, is a simplified depiction of typical child development. Typical children develop at a typical rate, achieving developmental milestones and grade level learning within a typical age range.

© by Stephanie Newitt

Asynchronous Development



Asynchronous = uneven development. Gifted children in their development are out of step with their same-age peers. Also, each gifted child is different in their asynchronous development. For example, imagine a lever on the end of each pie shape which would pull or push the area of development according to the individual child. ASYNCHRONOUS development is the HALLMARK of giftedness.

© by Stephanie Newitt

Images: <http://gilbertgifted.blogspot.com/2017/10/preparing-for-parent-teacher.html>

- ***Gifted children can't have a disability.***

Some gifted children also have a physical impairment, a learning difficulty or a psychological diagnosis. These challenges can make it very difficult for children to learn well and to show others what they know and can do. This is often called twice exceptional or doubly exceptional. *Related question:* [What is twice or doubly exceptional?](#)

- ***Gifted children are always perfectly behaved.***

Some gifted children can become bored and restless in class or at home. This could be because they simply don't enjoy school, they see school as irrelevant, or they feel understimulated by the learning environment. Sometimes children misbehave simply because they push boundaries, as they do not like authority, or they are taking advantage of others because they can. Normal ranges of human behaviour also apply to gifted children.

- ***Gifted children always score high marks.***

One size does not fit all. Each child is unique, and there are many reasons why a gifted child may underachieve or not be showing their true potential. (*Related question: [My child is performing far below his ability at school. What can I do to help?](#)*). Gifted learners exhibit different characteristics, traits, and ways of expressing their giftedness. There are many factors which can interfere with a child achieving high marks on a test or assessment task. Some gifted children:

- Face what is called the *Forced Choice Dilemma* ([definition](#)): they may not try their best as they may not want to stand out in class and not fit in with their friends. *Related question: [Why is my child not showing teachers at school what they can really do?](#)*
- Might not be good at certain subjects (a feature of [asynchronous development](#)).
- Might be anxious about formal testing and perform poorly on the day.
- Are twice exceptional and have other challenges interfering with their ability to show what they know and can do. *Related question: [What is twice or doubly exceptional?](#)*
- Are not interested in working hard to achieve high marks that reflect their potential, as they simply do not care about marks and grades.
- Are not easily 'programmed' by the school system, and like to show what they know and can do in different ways to what the teacher or test is asking them to do.

f What is the difference between 'gifted', 'highly able', and 'talented'?

People often use **gifted**, **highly able** and **talented** to mean the same thing, but there is a difference. *Giftedness* refers to the potential that a person has to learn quickly so that they can go on to develop *talents*. They may not have already demonstrated or developed their ability in any particular area. Children who are considered *highly able* have already shown their ability so this is more like *talent* in Gagné's model. *Related question: [Is there a definition of gifted?](#)*

g What percentage of the population is gifted?

According to world gifted expert François Gagné, we can classify the top 10% of any mixed ability group as gifted. This can be in one or more subjects or areas and is not limited to school subjects but includes sport, the arts and leadership. In selective schools, a much larger percentage are likely to be gifted as the group has already been selected according to ability.

Related question: [Is there a definition of gifted?](#)

h Is the negative stigma associated with using the word *gifted* mainly an Australian school system problem or do you see it in other countries too?

Australia is well known for supporting the 'underdog' and 'keeping tall poppies in check'. Some people think that if someone is labeled as *gifted*, that means they are better than other people. So there is a reluctance to use the label.

This is seen in other countries too. But some countries are more accepting than others. For example, in many states in America, teachers need specialist training and accreditation to work with gifted students in their schools. Gifted students are seen as a group who need specialist help to learn. We do not have that kind of requirement for teachers in Australia.

i Will teachers at my school know how to identify my gifted child?

While the Australian teacher education system does not require all pre-service teachers to be specifically trained in working with gifted and high ability students, all schools have a mandate to cater for the learning needs of each student in each class. This means that teachers should be given ongoing training and support by their schools in how to identify what giftedness looks like in the learning behaviours and outcomes of their students.

j What are some options available to me and to the school for identifying giftedness in my child?

The more ways you can gather information about your child and their giftedness, the better. The goal with this process of identifying giftedness in a child should always be to help you, your child and those they interact with, to understand them well and to help meet their needs. These needs might be academic, intellectual, learning, social, emotional, creative or spiritual.

There are many [assessment tools](#) that can be used to identify gifted students. Identification of giftedness takes a number of forms:

- A psychologist can administer a [WISC V, WPPSI or a variety of other psychometric tests](#) [looking](#) for an IQ score.

- Teachers and peers **observing** your child in the classroom can see giftedness in action through the way your child interacts with the learning opportunities and through what they show in their learning outcomes. Checklists that focus on a child's characteristics and how they behave are a really good way that teachers, parents and peers can identify gifted children. It is good to remember that one test or checklist does not always identify giftedness. A variety of [observational checklists](#) are available online.
- Samples of your child's work can be collected by you or the classroom teacher to develop a portfolio that shows the development of your child's talents.
- Ability grouping, which is grouping students of similar ability for learning and teaching, can assist teachers in making observations. It allows them to see gifted learning behaviours as high ability students work collaboratively and bounce ideas off one another.
- Schools can administer [ability testing](#), which can pick up on a child's reasoning ability, not attached to any particular area of curriculum or school subject at a certain year level. These ability tests are a very effective way of identifying giftedness that might not show up in regular classroom assessments or achievement tests. Some of the readily available assessments are the [HAST, CoGAT, KBIT and Ravens Progressive Matrices](#).
- Teachers can also administer [standardised tests](#) like [PAT Maths](#) or [PAT English](#) which can identify them as having high ability in a certain subject area. It is important to remember that it is not just academic learning areas where your child may have high ability. *Related question: [Is there a definition of gifted?](#)*

It is important to remember that gifted learners are diverse, and each child develops skills and abilities at different rates. So while your four year old may be able to add and subtract three digit numbers, they may struggle to draw a recognizable house. Your older gifted child might be [accelerated](#) in Mathematics but might struggle to write an essay. They may paint like Picasso but not understand a classroom joke. This is called [asynchronous development](#) and is an important feature of all childhood development.

Related Questions: [What is acceleration?](#), [Are the common myths about gifted children true?](#), [How do I know if my child is gifted?](#), [How are gifted and high ability children catered for in the regular classroom?](#)

k What are the differences between teacher assessment of my child and the intelligence tests administered by psychologists?

Different children show their giftedness differently: some speak using adult language and ideas to show their giftedness, and it is easy to recognise. But what about those who don't show it on the surface?

- Teachers can administer testing which gives very helpful information about how your child thinks and achieves. *Related question: [What are some options available to me and to the school for identifying giftedness in my child?](#)*
- A teacher, although working closely with your child, is also working with a whole class. They may not have time to notice the behaviours and characteristics your child shows, to the same depth and detail that a psychologist can. And it is likely that they have not had the specialised training to notice what giftedness looks and sounds like.
- An educational psychologist, working one on one with a child, has specialised tools and skills to make observations about the child and how they think and learn. If they specialise with gifted children, they will know what to look for and what questions to ask. They will also give recommendations to teachers, parents and other support people: they will list strategies that can guide decisions about home- and school-based interventions to help your child in their growth and development.

Observations and data from both psychologists and teachers together can help to make decisions about how to make the learning experiences suitable for your gifted child and their learning needs.

l What if I can't afford a WISC V or other IQ assessment for my child?

It is important to remember that you do not need an IQ assessment in order to help your child learn and live well as a gifted individual. Many schools like their gifted students to have IQ assessments, because the external opinion can be seen as very reliable. Schools and parents also benefit greatly from the recommendations made by psychologists. However there are other ways your child's giftedness can be identified, even if you can not afford a formal assessment. Many schools can access a psychologist to assist your child at no cost to you. Check with your child's teacher or the principal.

You can ask your GP to organise an assessment by a psychologist, but it may not be covered by Medicare or your private fund.

Related questions: [What are some options available to me and to the school for identifying giftedness in my child?](#), [So how do I know if my child is gifted?](#), [Observational Checklists for teachers, parents and other professionals.](#)

m Where can I go to get my child assessed and what does it cost?

There are a few ways you can access a cognitive assessment for your child:

- Your school may be able to refer you to an educational psychologist. Some schools have a psychologist on staff.
- Your GP can give you a referral. Make sure that you ask them to refer you to someone who specialises in gifted children and can perform a WISC-V.
- You can contact a local psychologist directly but make sure that they have experience in assessing and providing support for gifted children. If you suspect your child might be **twice exceptional**, it is essential that the psychologist thoroughly understands giftedness and twice exceptionality.
- Some universities have facilities where psychologists in training can perform testing under supervision. This is often the cheapest option. You can find out whether or not the university you are looking at offers this service by visiting the website and searching for the Clinical Psychology department.
- The cost from a private provider can be \$500 to \$3000. If organised through your child's DET school, then DET covers the cost but there can be a long waiting time.

n Why is my child's processing speed low according to the **WISC-V? What can we do to help him?**

While fast processing speed is often associated with high IQ, some gifted children process ideas more slowly but much more deeply. Sometimes they are trying to consider every available option when they are asked a question, and this takes a long time (there are so many options!).

- Remember the age-old advice to prioritise quality over quantity.
- If there is stress because your child makes slow progress through their workload, focus on the quality of the work. Work with your child's teachers to negotiate how they might focus on only those tasks and questions which are a 'good fit' for challenge, rather than your child feeling pressure to complete every task.
- Break down tasks into smaller, manageable chunks that your child can work through at a pace that suits them.

o My child has been assessed as gifted. Will her brothers and sisters also be gifted?

There is research that supports the idea that giftedness is inherited. That means that it is likely that sisters and brothers are similar in their ability to learn quickly. There is research which shows that children are usually within 10 IQ points of their siblings' or parents' IQ scores.

The most important thing is to treat each of your children as an individual and to celebrate their unique strengths and interests. Avoid comparing siblings with each other, and allow each child to follow their own path through life.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

Key words

Ability: capacity that an individual is born with in some area of human endeavour

Acceleration: progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than conventional

Ability grouping: grouping students of similar ability (general or subject-specific) together for learning and teaching activities

Ability testing: using assessment tools or observation to discover an individual's natural capacity

Achievement: an individual's performance in a particular area of human endeavour

Assessment tools: testing that has standardised measures, processes and outcomes, for the sake of measuring ability and achievement

Asynchronous development: two or more aspects of development that do not exist or happen at the same time

CoAT: Cognitive Abilities Test

Dual/double exceptionality: simultaneously having one or more areas of giftedness with one or more disabling conditions (physical, academic, social, emotional, psychological); also called twice exceptionality or 2e

Forced choice dilemma: perceiving a need to choose between being socially accepted, or achieving highly in academic disciplines

Giftedness: the capacity for high performance, exceptional production, or exceptional learning behaviour in the top 10% of any population

HAST: Higher Ability Selection Test

High ability: having natural ability in an area of human endeavour that is higher than the average population; often used to describe intellectual capacity

Intelligence tests: assessment tools that measure intellectual capabilities, or intelligence quotient (IQ); common tests are WISC-V and Stanford-Binet

KBIT: Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test

Observational checklists: checklists that can be completed by parents, teachers and other professionals that show characteristics of giftedness observed in a child

PAT: Progressive Achievement Test

Psychometric testing: tools that identify and measure an individual's abilities, skills, knowledge and personality

Ravens Progressive Matrices: assessment tool that scores nonverbal reasoning, or the ability to think or solve problems that are visual rather than based on or communicated with words

Standardised tests: exams administered and scored in a standard, or consistent, manner. Such tests can be given to large groups of students in the same area, state or nation, using the same grading system to enable a reliable comparison of student outcomes.

Synchronous development: two or more aspects of development that occur at an even rate or at the same time

Talent: giftedness that has been systematically developed and given opportunity to show itself in behaviours or actions

Twice exceptionality (2e): simultaneously having one or more areas of giftedness with one or more disabling conditions (physical, academic, social, emotional, psychological); also called dual/double exceptionality

Underachievement: not performing or achieving at a level that reflects an individual's innate ability or potential

WISC-V: Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children

WPPSI: Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence

Useful Links

Assessment Tools:

- ACER Ability Tests: <https://www.acer.org/au/agat>, <https://www.acer.org/au/hast-secondary>, <https://shop.acer.edu.au/cognitive-abilities-testtm-cogatr.html>

- KBIT: <https://www.pearsonclinical.com.au/products/view/229>
- Ravens: <https://www.pearsonclinical.com.au/products/view/53>
- WISC-V: <https://www.pearsonclinical.com.au/products/view/579>

DET High Ability Tool Kit:

Set of resources designed to assist teachers in providing for gifted and high ability students.

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/high-ability-toolkit/Pages/high-ability-toolkit.aspx>

Gagné's Differentiating Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT):

<https://gagnefrancoys.wixsite.com/dmgt-mddt>

Observational checklists for teachers, parents and other professionals:

- *Lannie Kanevsky*: ways to identify giftedness in action through 'Brilliant Behaviours' <http://possibilitiesforlearning.com/brilliant-behaviors/>
- *Sharon Lind*: ADHD/giftedness checklist <https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/before-referring-a-gifted-child-for-add-adhd-evaluation/>
- *Caroline Merrick*: positive/negative behaviours as two sides of the same coin <http://www.wmyc.vic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Primary-Teachers-nomination-form.pdf>
- *Michael Saylor*: behavioural checklist designed for teachers with space to annotate/give evidence for each characteristic <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/saylerteach.pdf>
- *Michael Saylor*: behavioural checklist designed for parents with space to annotate/give evidence for each characteristic <http://www.tasgifted.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Sayers-Checklist-for-Parents.pdf>
- *Janice Szabos*: bright vs gifted vs creative child distinctions https://www.swasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Szabos_J_-_Bright_Child_Gifted_Learner.pdf

Raising gifted children: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/videos/gifted-children>

This website includes video clips of gifted children and their parents.

Types of giftedness:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/classrooms/Pages/resourcehighabilitypracleader19.aspx>

Further Reading

Clark, B. (2008). *Growing up gifted (7th ed)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Delisle, J.R. (2018). *Doing poorly on purpose: Strategies to reverse underachievement and respect student dignity*. Alexandria, V.A.: ASCD.

Sternberg, R.J. (2017). ACCEL: a new model for identifying the gifted. *Roeper Rev.* 39:152–69.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

- If your child is intensely interested in solving the world's problems, it can be a joy to share their optimism and desire to 'change the world'.

b What are some of the challenges of parenting a gifted child?

Despite some of the [myths around parenting a gifted child](#), it is not always easy, and there are some unique challenges parents of gifted children face, such as:

- Keeping up with the level of stimulation and healthy challenge they require to keep loving life and learning.
- Understanding and accepting your child's [asynchronous development](#). They might have strengths in some areas and challenges in others, and this may be confusing and difficult to navigate. *Related question: [Are the common myths about gifted children true?](#)*
- Experiencing intensities in the home, and some of the social and emotional challenges that come with these intensities, such as meltdowns, compliance issues, anxiety and perfectionism. *Related questions: [Is it normal for my child to sometimes get so intense or overexcited that they have meltdowns?](#), [My gifted child is a high achiever and has high expectations of herself that may be unrealistic or unattainable. How can I help my child deal with this challenge?](#)*
- Feeling like you can't share openly with other parents about your parenting experiences. This could be because sharing about your child's strengths, successes and achievements makes other parents think you are boasting. Or other parents may think you don't have the right to complain about the challenges. They might have heard and believed myths about parenting gifted children always being easy.
- Watching your child experience social issues with friends, or struggle to find friends who they feel accepted by and comfortable with.
- Worrying about your child's academic progress if they say they don't like school, or if you feel that their needs are not being met at school.
- Seeing your child [underachieve](#) if they are not able to learn to their potential for some reason. *Related question: [My child is performing far below his ability at school. What can I do to help?](#)*
- Needing to learn how to help your child with coping strategies for challenges they may be experiencing. These challenges could be social, emotional or educational.
- Feeling isolated and alone on the journey if the challenges become overwhelming.

c What can I do to help my child be happy at school?

All children deserve to be happy and thriving at school, and to have the opportunity to love learning. While there is no such thing as a 'perfect school' or school experience, some ways you can help your gifted child include:

- Understanding that sometimes 'being happy' can mean that your child is being academically successful. At other times, or for some children, having a positive and stable peer group is more important. The focus will shift, depending on your child's needs and situation at any given time. You as the parent will be well placed to work out with your child what to prioritise.
- Encouraging your child to see the bigger picture of why school is important and what they can do to make their time at school purposeful. Early careers interests can be a good starting point for these conversations. Not all aspects of the curriculum will interest your child, but they need to be encouraged to see the relevance of all subjects.
- Understanding that a child can be gifted in one area but this does not mean they are gifted in all areas. This is called [asynchrony](#). You can encourage your child to celebrate and build on their own area/s of giftedness while also being open to growing in their areas of challenge or struggle. *Related question: [Are the common myths about gifted children true?](#)*
- Discussing the benefits of social interaction with other students who are like them (like-minded peers).
- Encouraging your child to work out how they can contribute positively to their class as a whole.
- Creating a safe environment at home to talk openly about what they are enjoying about school as well as what they are unhappy about. Problem solving conversations between parents and their gifted children can be very productive if they can reframe negative perceptions from, 'This is no good,' to, 'What can I do with help to make this better?'
- Encouraging your child to be their own advocate (with your support and coaching if necessary): if they require more challenge and complexity in their work, talk through with them how they might approach their teachers to have a conversation about their learning needs and desires.
- Helping them to recognise and act on what they can control, such as friendship groups they participate in, how they approach their schoolwork, and what clubs and other activities they get involved in.
- Working with teachers to put interventions in place, like curriculum differentiation or Individual Education Plans (IEPs)/Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)/Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs)- three names for the same thing - to assist with your child feeling engaged in their learning. Talk to the school about these interventions. *Related questions: [What is differentiation of the curriculum?](#), [What is the difference between the acronyms](#)*

[ILP/IEP/PLP/SSG/PSG/LSG?](#), [What will a PSG/ILP do to help my child?](#), [What involvement should I have in the development of my child's ILP?](#)

- Engaging a psychologist or other professional to work with you and your child if you feel like the issues are beyond your level of expertise.

d Why does my child tend to choose easy work at school?

Sometimes a gifted child may have a fear of failure, particularly if they feel the pressure of an expectation that they will always get things right. This may make them feel safer choosing easy work which they know they will be able to have success in without any fear that they might look like they don't know something.

Many gifted individuals also struggle with [Imposter syndrome](#), where they feel the pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, having self-doubt, and thinking they need to prove their giftedness, otherwise people will think they are an 'imposter' or a fraud.

Some tips for dealing with these tendencies are:

- Set a culture for open and honest conversations in your home. Allow time to ask your child how they are feeling, what they are thinking and what they believe about themselves and their abilities and choices. You can then respond to what they offer up in the conversation. Find opportunities for them to experience challenge that is beyond what they can independently succeed at.
- Practising a [supported failure approach](#) is very important, as it gives your child the opportunity to develop a [growth mindset](#): Let them fail and then reflect on their fears and experiences of the failure.
- Strategise towards learning how to '[fail forward](#)': fail but don't quit; work out how to learn from the failure so that you are growing and moving forward.
- Reassure your child that it is actually important to learn to 'fail forward' and well, and that failure is one of the best ways we learn from our mistakes. *Related question:* [What can I do at home to help my child be the best they can be?](#)
- Try activities such as: baking a cake, building a rabbit hutch, meeting new neighbours. These are all things children can learn to do that may be outside their comfort zone, but that give them an opportunity to try new skills and take risks in a safe and supported environment.
- Play age-appropriate but challenging and complex games with your child. Games are a good way to teach your child to become comfortable with failing or losing. Resist the temptation to let your child win, though, as this can be a perfect opportunity for your child to learn resilience.

It is important to recognise that culturally diverse groups may understand success differently. If you feel you need extra support in helping your child develop a growth mindset from a culturally appropriate perspective, it may help to find a trusted adult or mentor from your cultural context who can have some of these conversations with your child.

Related question: [Do you have any tips for high ability students who shy away from challenges?](#)



e My gifted child is a high achiever and has high expectations of herself that may be unrealistic or unattainable. How can I help my child deal with this challenge?

Research says that having high expectations is good for children's understanding of themselves and what they can do. But if the high expectations start to become too high, unrealistic, or unattainable, unhealthy stress and pressure can develop. This can happen easily to children who have [perfectionistic tendencies](#). You can help your child by:

- Creating a safe environment at home to talk openly about your child's expectations of themselves and what they think others expect of them.
- Having a routine of setting up problem solving conversations together when you notice your child's stress levels becoming unhealthy.
- Working out what your child is afraid of and why: Are they afraid of failing, or of letting you down, or is there something else at play?
- Helping your child recognise when they may be engaging in negative self-talk and helping them to see their talents framed in a positive but realistic way.
- In calm moments, teaching your child how to practise [mindfulness](#), so that they can cope with how they are feeling in difficult situations when you might not be there to support them. You might like to work with a professional (counsellor or psychologist) to develop these skills and strategies.
- Reassuring your child that school and high achievement are not the only things that matter: they are valued as an important part of your family, regardless of their achievements.



Image: <https://leadlifewell.com/blog/7-myths-perfectionism/>

f How do I get my child to stop thinking they have to do everything perfectly/first time?

One of the best ways of helping your child overcome the habit of putting pressure on themselves to do things perfectly and/or succeed at things at their first attempt, is to help them develop a [growth mindset](#). Coaching from you or another trusted adult or professional can assist with [perfectionistic](#) tendencies. *Related question:* [What can I do at home to help my child be the best they can be?](#)

- Help your child understand that failure is one of the best ways to grow: we can choose to see our mistakes as learning opportunities rather than as a sign that we are not good enough.
- Model healthy self-talk when you as an adult make mistakes: 'Oh, I just messed that calculation up! Oh well, I can remember that my approach didn't work so well this time, and next time, I'll be sure to check that I used the right process.' This helps to normalise mistake-making.
- Focus on your child's [strengths](#) and encourage them to use these strengths in a conscious way.
- Encourage them to experiment and try new ways of approaching the same task. Then reflect on what worked and what didn't with each attempt.
- Explain that no-one is perfect and 'perfection' is a mythical target. We should spend our energy striving to do well and to grow, rather than stressing about not having

things perfect.

- Have specific conversations about personal bests, so that they are focusing on improving their own performance, rather than comparing themselves to others who have different gifts, skill sets and circumstances.
- Remind your child on a regular basis that you love them, and that your love for them does not depend on their performance or achievement.

g Why does my child have sophisticated ideas in some areas, but seem like a little child emotionally?

Sometimes it can seem that a child's 'brain is bigger than their body'. This can be confusing and stressful for both you as the parent and for your child. This is because we often don't realise that we are expecting our children to develop in a [synchronous](#) way. This means all areas of our lives are developing evenly at the same rate. In reality, there is no such thing as synchronous development, and gifted children can have very significant gaps in the way they develop in different areas (social, emotional, intellectual, physical and so on). This is called [asynchronous development](#). This means that a child may be many years ahead of their classmates intellectually, but some years behind emotionally. *Related question: [Are the common myths about gifted children true?](#)*

h Is it normal for my child to sometimes get so intense or 'overexcited' that they have meltdowns?

Often gifted children have a psychological trait called '[openness to experience](#)' which means that they are intellectually curious, creative and imaginative. With this often comes a great deal of intensity because of the deep and rich way they experience the world. Sometimes we see behaviours in our children that show [overexcitabilities](#), which are the ways they express their intensity of experience and the sensitivities they have as they interact with their environments.

Some of the possible indicators of openness to experience in a gifted individual are:

- Deep curiosity and a love of learning. Your child might have a strong desire to learn new things and a need to understand how things work. They might be very interested in asking 'why' questions about everything. They might enjoy philosophy and debates that challenge their thinking.
- Willingness to consider new and unconventional ideas, keeping an open mind about them.
- An active imagination, frequent daydreaming and an interest in fantasy.
- Strong appreciation of, interest in and capacity for music, literature, performing arts or

visual arts.

- Emotional intensity and a deep understanding of their own feelings. They tend to have a wide range of emotional experiences, both in depth and in variety.
- A need for plenty of physical activity as well as novelty and variety in their pursuits. They are open and willing to step out of their comfort zone just for the fun of it.
- A willingness to change and adapt their ways of thinking about what is right and wrong, depending on the unique situations people find themselves in.

Emotional intensity is a common feature of children who are open to experience, and these intensities have a purpose. We need to aim to help our children see the benefits of their intensities, as well as work through the challenges that these same intensities provide.

For example, a child may be intensely interested in drawing, and may want to develop their artistic abilities to one day become a successful professional artist. They will rely on their artistic intensity and drive to get them to a high level of accomplishment. They may also experience intense reactions to their efforts when they feel their drawings are not good enough. This can lead to meltdowns because they feel frustrated and insecure. They may compare themselves to other famous artists and feel like a failure.

Some strategies for dealing with your child's intense emotional expressions are:

- Creating a safe environment at home to talk openly about your child's experiences and feelings.
- Setting aside dedicated time to 'unpacking' how your child is feeling, with the aim of understanding what they are going through.
- Listening without judgement to them sharing how they are feeling.
- Helping them label how they are feeling, as this is a proven [neuroscientific](#) strategy for helping the brain calm the body down.
- Providing a special place at home to calmly sit and reflect.
- Helping your child identify their strengths, and showing them how they could use their strengths to help in difficult situations.
- Providing time over a shared meal for family members to share stories and strategies of dealing with difficult emotions.
- Reading stories of well known or successful people who have found a way to harness their strengths and intensities to overcome difficulties and to become who they are today.

- Finding time for ‘happiness building’ projects in line with interests and strengths: doing things together that your child can look forward to and that foster enjoyment, happiness and strong relationships with family, friends, and mentors.
- Sharing your experiences with other parents of gifted children.
- Accessing professional help through a psychologist, counsellor or other avenue.

It is also important to recognise that for some gifted children, intensities are a strong indicator that a formal diagnosis and appropriate interventions need to take place. Your child may have undiagnosed ADHD or autism, for example, and you may need to seek professional help in making sure your child does not have to live with misunderstanding of who they are: from others and from themselves. A very useful motto is: ***‘If in doubt, check it out!’***

Related questions: [Where can I find parents of other gifted children?](#), [What if my child is gifted but also has a disability or other challenges?](#), Related reference: [Giftedness and ADHD: Identification, Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnosis.](#)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

i How can I support my high ability child who just started senior school and has strong perfectionistic tendencies, knowing that the pressure is going to increase even more in [VCE/VCAL/IB](#)?

The senior years can become quite demanding and stressful, even for children who have high ability and/or who are high achievers. Often gifted children put pressure on themselves to achieve very high results, or they feel pressure from parents, teachers and peers to achieve very high results. [Perfectionistic tendencies](#) mean that gifted children are not always disciplined with how they use their time, and can work themselves too hard at the expense of their mental, physical, social and spiritual wellbeing. Here are some support tips:

- Remind your child that the purpose of school is to help them achieve their dreams. Help them to see the bigger picture and to keep it at the centre of everything they do.
- Practice gratitude as much as possible. Help your child identify what they might be afraid of (failure, low marks, letting people down etc), then focus on what they are grateful for (the opportunity to go to school, options for future study and a career etc).
- Reassure your child that your love for them is not determined by their achievements and success.
- Remind your child that holistic wellbeing (mental, physical, social and spiritual) requires careful attention and effort. Self-care is not a luxury but rather a necessity:

encourage your child to keep up exercise, healthy eating, friendships, hobbies and other nourishing activities.

- Help your child develop good routines and habits: have a schedule, break tasks down into chunks, take regular breaks, remove distractions.
- Work out what your child's deficits and needs are, and find help or support if you feel you are unable to provide this yourself (tutoring, counselling etc).
- Most schools offer study skills sessions or some support for students tackling senior high school. Encourage your child to participate.
- Help them set realistic timelines and goals. A list of 'to dos' on a small whiteboard can be helpful.

Related question: [My gifted child is a high achiever and has high expectations of herself that may be unrealistic or unattainable. How can I help my child deal with this challenge?](#)

Key Words

Asynchronous development: two or more aspects of development that do not exist or happen at the same time

Growth mindset: an approach to growth and development where individuals believe they can grow their capacity through effort, persistence and a mindset that sees failure and mistakes as a way to learn. This phrase was made famous by Dr Carol Dweck. *Related question: [What can I do at home to help my child to be the best they can be?](#)*

Failing forward: learning to accept failure and learn from it for the purposes of growth and development

Holistic wellbeing: looking at the individual as a whole person and at their wellbeing as incorporating body, mind, soul and spirit in an interconnected way

IB: International Baccalaureate is an internationally recognised educational program, with the diploma qualification substituting national or state senior secondary certificates (VCE, QCE, HSC etc)

IEP/ILP/PLPs: Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans or Personalised Learning Plans are documents which help teachers, parents, students and other professionals put strategies, goals and plans in place to ensure a child's learning needs are met.

Imposter syndrome: when a person feels the pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, having self-doubt, and thinking they need to prove their giftedness, otherwise people will think they are an 'imposter' or a fraud

Mindfulness: being aware of one's current state and concentrating on the present moment, which can help an individual to calm and relax.

Neuroscientific: relating to the science of the brain and how it functions

Openness to experience: a psychological trait or characteristic which is part of the Big Five Personality Theory of Five Factor Theory. People who are open to experience live with deep and complex emotional and mental experiences of the world.

Overexcitabilities: increased sensitivity, intensity and awareness in response to stimuli in a person's lived experience. Overexcitabilities form part of Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration.

Perfectionism: an unhealthy psychological fear of not being perfect. There is an overwhelming fear of failure or frustration with the imperfections of self and others.

Strengths-based approach: focusing on a person's strengths, rather than their deficits, and helping them use their strengths to address their deficits for optimal development

Supported failure approach: an approach to parenting, training or educating that allows for failure in a supportive environment, recognising that failure can lead to growth and success if managed well

Synchronous development: two or more aspects of development that occur at an even rate or at the same time

Underachievement: not performing or achieving at a level that reflects an individual's innate ability or potential

VCAL: Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, which is completed by students instead of the VCE. This is a trades-based pathway.

VCE: Victorian Certificate of Education, which is usually completed by students in Years 11 and 12 in Victoria who would like to follow a university pathway

Useful Links

Intensity:

<https://www.hoagiesgifted.org/sensitivity.htm://www.sengifted.org/post/overexcitability-and-the-gifted>

Openness to Experience and the Big Five Personality Theory:

<https://positivepsychology.com/big-five-personality-theory/>

Psychologists and testing: Hoagies Gifted - blog by gifted parents for gifted parents:
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/psychologists.htm>

Understanding overexcitabilities and strategies for positive growth:
<https://www.sengifted.org/post/overexcitability-and-the-gifted>

Further Reading

Cross, T. L., Speirs Neumeister, K. L., & Cassady, J. C. (2007). Psychological types of academically gifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51, 285-294. doi: 10.1177/0016986207302723

Csikszentmihalyi, M.(2020). *Finding Flow: The Psychology Of Engagement With Everyday Life* Psychology Today.

Dabrowski, K., Kawczak, A., & Piechowski, M.M. (1970). *Mental growth through positive disintegration*. London: Gryf.

Delisle, J.R. (2018). *Doing poorly on purpose:Strategies to reverse underachievement and respect student dignity*. Alexandria, V.A.: ASCD

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Random House.

Gallagher, S. A. (2012). Building bridges: Using the Big Five, Jungian type, and overexcitabilities to explore personality differences of gifted youth. In C. S. Neville, M. M. Piechowski, & S. S. Tolan (Eds.), *Off the charts: Asynchrony and the gifted child*. Unionville, NY: Royal Fireworks Press, pp. 56-118.

Mullet, D. R. & Rinn, A. N. (2015). Giftedness and ADHD: Identification, Misdiagnosis, and Dual Diagnosis, *Roepers Review*, 37:4, 195-207, DOI: 10.1080/02783193.2015.1077910.

Kerr, B. A., & McKay, R. (2013). Searching for tomorrow's innovators: Profiling creative adolescents. *Creativity Research Journal*, 25, 21-32. doi: 10.1080/10400419.2013.752180

Piechowski, M.M.(2014) *Mellow out they say. If only I could. Intensities and sensitivities of the young and bright*. (2nd ed.)Unionville,NY; Royal Fireworks Press.

Waters, L. (2017). *The Strength Switch*. North Sydney, NSW : Penguin Random House Australia.





3 What can be done at school to make sure my gifted child's needs are being met?

The schooling years are very important in any child's life, but there is potential for particularly rewarding learning and growth opportunities at school for a gifted child. A school that understands and caters well for your gifted child can spark curiosity and foster a love of learning all the way through from Prep to Year 12. There are some key questions you can ask your child's school, and some key ideas you can share, to help your child's school maximise the years your child is in their care.

a How are gifted and high ability children catered for in the regular classroom?

Regular classrooms can respond to the learning needs of gifted children in one or more of the following ways (more detailed information about each option can be found by clicking the link):

- **Early entry** to school: Your child might start Foundation or Prep a year earlier than the other children in their class. *Related question:* [Is early school entry a bad thing?](#)
- **Acceleration:** Your child might progress through a subject or a year level faster than their peers; this could also be a full grade-skip. *Related question:* [What is acceleration?](#)
- **Curriculum compacting:** Your child might learn the content from a subject or year level more quickly than other students in their class, and they might cover two or more years' worth of learning in one year. *Related question:* [What is curriculum compacting?](#)
- **Differentiation:** Your child's teacher can change or modify the classroom environment as well as learning opportunities and assessment tasks, depending on the different abilities/interests/needs of students. *Related question:* [What is differentiation of the curriculum?](#)

- **Enrichment:** Your child might participate in programs and activities outside the regular classroom; this might be during lunch, before or after school, or during the holidays. *Related question:* [What enrichment programs could be offered to my child at school?](#)
- Varied **grouping strategies:** Your child might be grouped with other students who learn and think like them within their regular classroom. This could also include pull out or withdrawal programs, where students miss some regular class time to do special programs where they are grouped according to interest or skill level. *Related question:* [Does my child need to be withdrawn from regular classes?](#)
- **Mentoring:** Your child may have access to teachers or older students who can mentor them. Sometimes a secondary school student might mentor a primary school student.
- Specialised DET **selective high schools:** These schools exist to meet the needs of high ability students. Selective schools have specific selection criteria to decide which students can attend, usually using [standardised assessment](#). *External resource:* [DET: selective entry](#).
- The DET **Student Excellence Program:** This program has been set up to deliver a range of initiatives to support government schools. The program helps schools create stimulating learning environments and build teacher confidence and capability in supporting and extending their high-ability students. *Related question and resource:* [What is the Victorian High Ability Program?](#), [DET: the Student Excellence Program](#).

b Will my child need a special program at school?

Gifted and highly able children need support to learn and grow to their capacity, just like all other children. While your child will benefit from special programs for gifted children, such programs are not available in every school. If you are concerned that your child is missing out on important opportunities to develop these skills and to have supported growth as a gifted child, ask the school what they can provide within their regular offerings for all students. This might be a combination of [enrichment activities](#) and regular classroom provisions. *Related question:* [What enrichment programs could be offered to my child at school?](#)

Your child's educational and learning needs can be met in the regular classroom through [differentiation of the curriculum](#), as well as through management of their educational experiences:

- A [PLP \(Personalised Learning Plan\)](#) or [ILP \(Individualised Learning Plan\)](#) can be written by the teachers for your child. This plan will look at your child's strengths, interests, areas for growth, goals, school interventions and home strategies. *Related question:* [What will a PSG/ ILP do to help my child?](#)
- There may be specific gifted programs at the school. This may be a special pull-out class for gifted students, or other programs and activities such as projects to do at home, clubs and competitions. Ask your child's teacher what might be available.

- In the [Student Excellence Program](#) every primary and secondary government school has access to a *High Ability Practice Leader (HAPL)*, who gives advice to teachers about how to cater for high ability students. The practice leader also coordinates students from their school to participate in the [Victorian High Ability Program](#) and the [Victorian Challenge](#).

c What is the Victorian High Ability Program?

The [Victorian High Ability Program \(VHAP\)](#) provides high ability students in Years 5 - 8 at government schools the opportunity to participate in 10-week online extension and enrichment programs, in English and Mathematics. This is funded for 2020 - 2022 by the Victorian State government. The purpose of the program is enrichment beyond the curriculum, not acceleration through the curriculum.

- The virtual program, delivered by Virtual School Victoria, focuses on extending and developing high ability students in Mathematics and English.
- After completing the virtual program, students may participate in a face-to-face masterclass with other high ability students from schools in their local area.
- The Department of Education and Training (DET) centrally manages the selection process for the program based on student academic performance. Parents of students selected for the VHAP program are provided with more information about the program by their school.

d What is curriculum compacting?

Curriculum compacting is where a student might learn the content from a subject or year level more quickly than other students in their class, and they might cover two or more years' worth of learning in one year.

- Some schools often compact the Year 7-10 curriculum into 3 instead of 4 years.
- Occasionally in primary school, students may complete two year levels in one year, especially if they are in a composite class.
- Curriculum compacting can also be used to free up time for students to pursue other interests which are not set by the curriculum. For example, if they cover their Maths curriculum in half the time it takes the rest of the class, they can undertake an independent research project in an area of personal interest.

e What is acceleration?

Acceleration moves students through an educational program at a more rapid pace than other students of their age or in their year level. The goal of acceleration is to provide more challenging work matched to your child's level. Acceleration can be:

- An entire year level: for example, your child completes Year 2 and then goes into Year 4, without doing Year 3 at all. Sometimes this is called grade or year skipping.
- Subject specific: for example, your child is in Year 5 but goes to the Year 6 class for Maths.
- Early entry to school: your child might start school a year earlier than their friends.
- Early entry to [VCE/VET/VCAL](#): your child might do a VCE/VET/VCAL subject while they are in Year 9 or Year 10.
- Early entry to university: universities often offer accelerated courses to Year 11 and 12 students. Your VCE child might go to university once or twice a week and do a first year subject instead of a VCE subject.

f Should my child be accelerated?

[Research has shown](#) that acceleration is a very effective way of meeting gifted students' needs, as they are accessing learning opportunities that match their intellectual ability, rather than only participating in learning that is not challenging enough for them. Acceleration can be a good option, even when a child's intellectual development may be more advanced than their social development. This is called [asynchronous development](#), and should not hold a child back from learning and growing at a pace and depth that is appropriate to them. When discussing the possibility of an accelerated learning program with your child's school, here are a few important ideas to consider:

- Your child's voice is important in this decision. It is a good idea to discuss the idea with your child before any commitments are made.
- A child does not need to be advanced in every area of life for an acceleration to be effective.
- Do a cost-benefit analysis: Are the costs of staying in the subject/year level they are in worth it (boredom, disengagement, cruising, lack of growth and learning etc)? Or will the cost of accelerating be greater (social and emotional challenges and immaturity, loss of friendships/peer group, anxiety about moving up a year level etc)?
- Ask the question, 'What is the outcome for my child if we do nothing?'
- It is valuable to set up a trial period and careful review cycle: If it is not working, the decision can easily be reversed after 6 weeks or 6 months, or whatever you and the teachers decide is a good time frame for measuring the effectiveness of the acceleration.

- Ask the principal or a teacher if the school has a policy on acceleration. Usually, the principal makes the final decision as to whether to accelerate a student.

There are tests such as the [Iowa Scales](#) that help to determine if an acceleration will be beneficial.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

g Is it OK for my child to be mixing with other older students if s/he is accelerated?

Gifted children are often keen to mix with older students. Some important considerations are:

- **Mental age match:** Sometimes it is more important for a gifted child to have like-minded peers than it is to have same-age peers. Talk to your child about what they think is more important if you feel you need to decide between the two.
- The **appropriateness of activities and content**, both inside and outside of the classroom: Gifted children will have the ability to engage with ideas and content at a higher level than their chronological age. Sometimes what is appropriate for one age is not an appropriate choice for someone younger, so it is important to monitor what children are being exposed to.

h Does my gifted child need to be withdrawn from regular classes?

Withdrawal or pull-out programs are a common feature of school provisions for high ability children. However, if the classroom is set up with effective grouping on the basis of ability, and [differentiation](#) within the regular curriculum, your child may feel satisfied with the level of challenge and stimulation they experience in their normal classroom.

Withdrawing a gifted child from the class for more in-depth teaching can be beneficial as they will have access to:

- Specialised curriculum that can extend and challenge their learning.
- Teachers who have been trained in gifted education and understand gifted children and their needs.
- Like-minded peers who can appreciate and participate in the learning in a deeper and more complex way.
- The opportunity to explore niche or specialised areas of interest that may never be covered in the regular curriculum.
- Smaller groups of students with greater capacity for individualising the learning.

- More options for students to learn in a way that suits them and their interests.

i Should my child be placed in a streamed classroom?

Full-time grouping within particular subjects with students of similar abilities is called [streaming](#) and is often used in Australia to group students. Streaming can be a good option for gifted students. It allows for students to learn at a similar pace to the other students in the class. There are more opportunities for differentiating the curriculum specifically for high ability students, as the level and ability of the students in the class is generally higher than in regular mixed ability classes.

- Streaming tends to happen more in secondary schools, when the content in particular subjects like Maths and English becomes more specialised.
- Streaming can often be in a subject group; for example students who are mathematically gifted might be placed in the same Maths class.

Some parents are reluctant to have their children placed in steamed classes as they have heard that streaming can have a negative effect. Some research shows that streaming has a negative impact on the self-confidence and self-belief of low performing students, but that there is not a significant difference in the achievement of middle to high achieving students.

j What is differentiation of the curriculum?

[Differentiation of the curriculum](#) means varying the way a child can learn in the classroom, depending on their ability, learning needs, strengths and challenges. This could be through making changes or modifications in:

- **Content:** what is learned
- **Process:** the way your child learns or is taught
- **Product:** what they produce to show what they know and have learned
- **Environment:** the way the classroom is set up, how the relationships between teachers and students work out and so on.

For example, if your child's class is studying immigration, the students might be asked to list three of the largest groups of migrants in Australia and present the information on a poster. Your child might be asked to analyse the patterns of migration to Australia from other parts of the world over the last two centuries. Your child might be allowed to choose what format they present their information in: poster, coded game, interview, video etc.

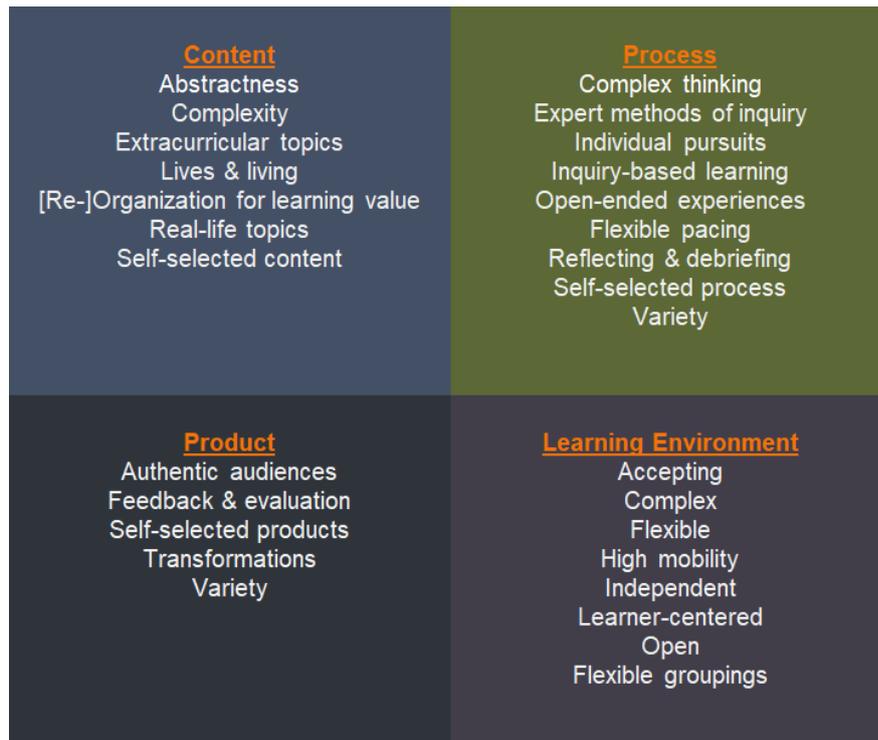


Image: Maker Model of Differentiation for Gifted Students, <https://www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/our-schools/education/professional-learning/gerric-gifted-education/resources/professional-development-package-teachers>

- Teachers can match the learning with your child's current knowledge and ability: In a particular unit of work on a topic, some students might need a basic introduction to the new curriculum while others have already mastered this basic information and can start at a higher level.
- If you would like to know more about your child and differentiated learning, ask the teacher how your child's curriculum is differentiated to suit their learning needs. Is the content, the way they are taught, what they produce and the learning environment catering for your child's needs?

k What enrichment programs could be offered to my child at school?

The offerings of enrichment programs at different schools will vary as much as the schools themselves. Often school websites have information about what is on offer at your child's school. If you cannot find anything on the website, ask your child's teacher or call the school and ask to speak to someone who can answer your questions.

- Enrichment opportunities like chess, Lego, coding, Tournament of Minds, subject competitions, debating clubs or book clubs are offered by many schools.

- Ask your child's teacher for a list of voluntary enrichment opportunities on offer at your child's school. These opportunities will depend on the interests and skills of school staff and volunteers.
- You may like to consider offering an activity that your child would love to be involved in if you have the skills and the school supports volunteers.
- Tertiary institutions like universities often offer special programs during the term and during the holidays so it is worthwhile checking their websites for information.
- There may be other programs in your area which the school or other parents might have information about. Check the school newsletter for details of upcoming programs.
- The [VAGTC](#) regularly updates and publishes a [Resource Book](#) which is updated every second year, and it can point you to a large variety of programs that can be accessed both at school and at home.

I Is early school entry a bad thing? I have heard that it is better for kids to start school later – 6 or older.

Research varies in answer to the question of early school entry. Some Northern European countries insist that children are 6 years of age before they start school, however we do not have this as a guideline in Australia. The most important considerations to make when deciding whether to send your child to school early or not are:

- **Intellectual readiness:** If your child is gifted, there is a good chance that they will be ready at a younger age for the intellectual stimulation that school provides. Some gifted children are so bored at home, even when they are very young, that keeping them at home would be an unwise choice.
- **Academic readiness:** If your child is showing academic readiness (for example, they might be already reading and writing, or able to do simple - or complex - Maths sums), you may want to consider starting school early.
- **Social and emotional readiness:** Some children are not emotionally ready to start school, even though they are intellectually and academically ready. Some parents choose to wait a year before sending their young child to school, so that they can have time to develop further socially and emotionally.

[Asynchronous development](#) is where two or more aspects of development don't happen at the same time. This mismatch in development is an important feature of a gifted child's developmental profile. It might be worthwhile talking to your child's future school if you are unsure about the best decision to make. *Related question:* [What is acceleration?](#)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

m Can my child begin school earlier than the set date in Victoria?

The Victorian government advises that children must be 5 years old by April 30 of the year they begin Foundation or Prep. There are exemptions available for starting school earlier. If you are considering this option:

- Discuss the possibility of your child's early entry directly with the school you are thinking of enrolling your child at. Different schools have different policies and processes for dealing with early entry requests.
- It is worthwhile asking your child's kindergarten teacher for their opinion on early entry. Their perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages for your child towards the end of their kinder year may provide you with some insights and recommendations which you can take to your discussions with the school.

There are pros and cons to early entry:

Pros:

- Your child may be developmentally ready for school at an earlier age than 'normal' which means they are ready and will cope with school even though they are younger.
- Starting school may provide the challenge and stimulation your child needs to keep their curiosity and love of learning alive.
- Your child may already be doing things that a Prep child is doing at school, and they can continue their growth by being at school with older children.

Cons:

- Your child may have social and/or emotional challenges and might not feel quite ready to go to school, even though they are intellectually or academically ready. This can cause stress, anxiety and social issues.
- Some early starters are the youngest and the smallest in their year level sport teams and physical development plays a large part in their confidence and success.
- Some issues with maturity can surface when a child starts Year 7 (secondary school). This is particularly common in boys who start early.

n What do I do if my child becomes disengaged and does not want to be at school?

The word "disengagement" is often used to label the state of students who have withdrawn emotionally, intellectually and sometimes physically from their learning at school.

Disengagement is not uncommon amongst gifted students, and it can be very challenging for

parents to see their children displaying negative and uncooperative behaviours around school attendance and learning. Some possible causes of disengagement include:

- Lack of adequate challenge and stimulation in learning. This can lead to boredom and to 'switching off'.
- Lack of a sense of purpose at school and relevance to 'the real world'. If a child doesn't see the point in being at school, they are likely to disengage.
- Some gifted children are teased because they are different from other students. This can lead to bullying and can cause a child to disengage from their learning.
- A child gifted in one area does not mean gifted in all areas. Your child may be discouraged that they are not performing well in all subjects, and they may decide to not try hard at school any more for fear that they will look like a failure.

There is no single recipe for maintaining a child's engagement at school, but here are a few suggestions you might like to try:

- Talk with your child. Ask them what they are thinking and experiencing, and listen without judgement to them as they share.
- Ask about social relationships: Are they having trouble with other children? Do they feel like they have at least one good friend?
- Bullying concerns should be referred to the teacher straight away.
- Ask about the learning experiences they are having: Are they learning new things, or are they bored? Children will often say that 'school is boring', however there is a difference between a child wanting to be playing instead of at school, and a child not experiencing adequate stimulation and challenge with their learning.
- If your child is bored, and you feel they are not experiencing appropriate stimulation and challenge, you and your child can talk to your child's teacher and put some goals and strategies into place. *Related question: [My child says that he would like more challenging school work. What can I do?](#)*
- Encourage your child to develop a [growth mindset](#) in subjects or areas they don't feel strong in. Remind your child that they don't have to be good at everything, and that challenge and mistakes are a very important part of developing resilience and of growth. *Related question: [How do I get my child to stop thinking they have to do everything perfectly/ first time?](#)*
- Ask your child to identify one adult at school they know they have a strong connection with, and foster this relationship in appropriate ways.
- If there are significant social and/or emotional issues that you and your child's teacher can't find a way to work through, a counsellor or psychologist may be a good option for strategies and support.

o Will being identified as gifted cause my child to be teased or rejected by other students at school?

There is no doubt that giftedness can be perceived by a gifted child, as well as their peers, as a point of difference. Some school children may be jealous or envious of gifted children and their achievements, especially if they themselves find learning a struggle. Sometimes any form of difference can be a focal point for bullying. Schools have strong and clear policies regarding zero tolerance for bullying so it is important to be proactive if you feel like your child is being bullied.

To help your gifted child have a healthy understanding of themselves when around others:

- Help your child to understand how they can see their giftedness and their gifts as a means to help and serve others, rather than as a bragging point. Teaching humility even to young children can have a very positive outcome as they grow older.
- Foster a family culture that celebrates all children and their unique strengths, rather than prioritising certain children because of their achievements.
- Unpack together what a label like 'nerd' or 'smarty-pants' means and help your child come up with useful thoughts and responses if these names come up at school in a teasing way.
- Read books or watch movies and shows together that have main characters who also have unique abilities. Discuss how the characters might feel, and what they do to overcome feelings of isolation or social difficulty. For example, the television show *Malcolm in the Middle* has some interesting points of discussion.

Talk to your child's teacher if you feel the social interactions between your child and their peers are unhealthy or causing distress for your child.

p My child is performing far below his ability at school. What can I do to help?

If your child is happy at school, that is a very good sign that they are engaged with their learning and their social relationships. It is important to consider the holistic development of your child, and to recognise that a child's development is not only measured by success on school tests.

It could be that your child is focusing on another area of passion or interest other than schoolwork. They might be happy to learn and achieve at the pace and level they are currently at so that they can free up time and energy for their other interests.

The concern is if your child is not learning or making progress, and if they are losing engagement and motivation. Some tips for supporting your child's progress include:

- Don't rush your child. Make sure they are ready for increasing levels of pressure and expectation.
- It is important for your child to love learning, even if that is not always at school. If they are very passionate about a certain subject or interest area, support them in pursuing this.
- Watch for signs of [disengagement](#) and talk through with your child what might be going on for them. *Related question:* [What do I do if my child becomes disengaged and does not want to be at school?](#)
- Discuss your child's level of motivation and satisfaction with their learning and school life. Address any issues that arise.
- Make sure that your home environment provides good stimulation for your child in their area of interest. For example, providing plenty of reading material and access to big ideas can be very good for your child's intellectual development, which can in turn lead to deeper engagement with learning at school.
- Talk to the teacher and ask about providing more challenging work for your child if you feel that this is an area that needs improvement.

q Are teachers trained to provide for my gifted child?

An important part of a teacher's task is to [differentiate the curriculum](#) for their students, which means that they make adjustments to the teaching and learning activities each day to help students learn well. [Preservice teachers](#) learn about how to differentiate the learning for their students while they are completing their teaching degrees. It is not a requirement for registration that teachers have gifted education training, though. Not all university courses include extensive information about catering for gifted students. It is often an optional part of the program. It is important to remember that:

- Giftedness is not always obvious, and some children may need teachers who have been specially trained in gifted education to identify and encourage their gifts.
- All teachers are required to participate in professional development and training as part of their annual registration renewal. Part of this requirement is training that is focused on students with diverse learning needs, including students who have high ability. VAGTC, along with other providers, offers seminars to help teachers improve their understanding of gifted students and their learning needs.

Related Question: [What is differentiation of the curriculum?](#)

r Is it a good idea to allow my older child to advance into content which might overlap with VCE material?

It is important that gifted children are given the opportunity to have learning opportunities that meet their needs and that allow them to experience challenge and stimulation. This might mean that your child is ready to study VCE subjects before they get to VCE.

There are many different pathways that gifted students can take as they progress through secondary school, including:

- Studying a VCE subject just for interest
- [Accelerating](#) a VCE subject
- Taking a university enhancement subject while still at school

A comprehensive [Individual Learning Plan \(ILP\)](#) will be able to take all aspects of a student's pathway into consideration.

Some schools may be reluctant to allow students to access VCE content in advance, because they might have an understanding that the VCE needs to be completed within a 3 year time frame. VCAA does not publish a maximum number of years for completing the VCE. If your child's school is not allowing your child to access VCE content early, it may be helpful to talk to the school to discuss options which will allow your child to enrol in these subjects without concerns about the 3 year time frame.

Related questions: [What is acceleration?](#), [Should my child be accelerated?](#), [What will a PSG/ILP do to help my child?](#)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

s What is the difference between the terms ILP/IEP/PLP/SSG/PSG/LSG?

These terms are used very commonly in schools.

Three ways of saying the same thing are:

- ILP: *Individual Learning Plan*
- IEP: *Individual Education Plan*
- PLP: *Personalised Learning Plan*

These learning plans are specifically targeted at your child's learning needs. They document learning goals and are not limited to academic needs as any area of development can be an area of focus.

Plans are developed by collaboration between teachers, parents, students and other support providers (for example, student wellbeing or learning support staff). This collaboration discussion happens at a meeting called:

- *SSG: Student Support Group*
- *PSG: Personalised Support Group*
- *LSG: Learning Support Group*

t What will a PSG/ILP do to help my child?

An ILP gives a framework that is agreed upon by parents, staff and children for supporting your child in their learning at school. This document can capture a lot of important information about your child, such as:

- Background information
- Strengths
- Interests
- Challenges
- Data that has been collected, either through testing and assessment, or through observation

It also gives teachers, parents and children clear and structured goals and targets to work towards. These goals could be:

- Short or long term
- Academic
- Intellectual
- Social
- Emotional

u What involvement should I have in the development of my child's ILP?

- Usually ILPs are discussed face to face at a [PSG/SSG](#).

- Parents are entitled and should be strongly encouraged to attend these meetings. This means you will need to have sufficient notice of the meeting so that you can arrange to attend. In DET schools the policy is that parents are always involved in the discussion before an ILP is written. Parents have a valuable contribution to make in evaluating and refining goals.
- Students are sometimes included in the meetings. Unless there is an important reason for excluding your child (for example, confidential issues being discussed), the strong recommendation is that your child is involved in discussions relating to their own growth and learning.

v How will my child's giftedness be catered for if her/his abilities are in areas other than the academic fields?

If your child is gifted in art, leadership, music or sport, their needs for advanced learning can be met in co-curricular offerings such as school ensembles and productions, sports programs or student leadership development initiatives.

It is a good idea to keep your child's teacher up to date with your child's out of school involvement in areas of advanced development. For example if your child is a member of a drama society, or volunteers as a youth leader, the teacher can bring this knowledge into what they plan in the classroom for your child. This can also form a good basis for appropriate provisions to be made for your child through the development of their [ILP](#). *Related question: [What will a PSG/ILP do to help my child?](#)*

w At what age should gifted children be encouraged to study a musical instrument?

[Research](#) points to how good music is for a child's holistic development. There are links between studying a musical instrument and academic achievement. Music can and should be a part of a child's everyday life from an early age, but this doesn't mean you need to enrol your child in formal tuition. Children should be exposed to music informally as young as possible, but your child can start music tuition from whatever age they show interest and ability.

If your child has not played an instrument before, you might like to consider:

- Early exposure music programs
- Bands and ensembles for beginners
- Children's choirs
- Private individual or group lessons on an instrument of choice

If your child shows particular interest in music in general or in a certain instrument, you might like to consider:

- Individual tuition on an instrument your child is particularly interested in learning.
- School bands, choirs and ensembles: most schools will have a music program that offers a variety of opportunities for students to learn instruments and to play or sing together in ensembles.
- Community bands, choirs and ensembles: there are many opportunities to play and sing in ensembles that are organised and run by members of the community. You might like to check council websites to see what is on offer in your local area.

x How do we get our gifted child accepted into a school for high ability children if there is not one in our school zoned area?

If you have decided that a specialised school for high ability children, which is outside of your school zone, is the best option for your child:

- Contact the school directly and ask for their advice and information about enrolments for families who live outside of that zone. They may have individual processes or recommendations that they can work through with you.
- For schools that are designated as specialised schools for the gifted or [SEAL \(Select Entry Accelerated Learning\)](#), there are entry tests that are usually sat in the preceding year. These are standardised assessments usually administered by external academic assessment providers. Ask the school for information about dates and processes.

When deciding what school to send your child to, it can be helpful to remember that the best school for your child will be one where they feel happy and like they belong, and that caters for their interests and learning needs. It does not necessarily need to be a designated school for the gifted in order to meet your child's needs.

Related question: [How will I know if the school is the right one for my child?](#)



y Do you have any tips for high ability students who shy away from challenges? My son tends to choose easy things and fool around, even though he is capable of much more challenge.

Sometimes a gifted child may have a fear of failure, particularly if they feel the pressure of an expectation that they will always get things right. This may make them feel safer choosing easy work which they know they will be able to have success in without any fear that they might look like they don't know something.

Many gifted individuals also struggle with [Imposter syndrome](#), where they feel the pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, having self-doubt, and thinking they need to prove their giftedness, otherwise people will think they are an 'imposter' or a fraud.

Some tips for dealing with these tendencies are:

- Set a culture for open and honest conversations in your home. Allow time to ask your child how they are feeling, what they are thinking and what they believe about themselves and their abilities and choices. You can then respond to what they offer up in the conversation. Find opportunities for them to experience challenge that is beyond what they can independently succeed at.
- Practise a [supported failure approach](#). This is very important, as it gives your child the opportunity to develop a [growth mindset](#): let them fail and then reflect on their fears and experiences of the failure.
- Strategise towards learning how to '[fail forward](#)': fail but don't quit; work out how to learn from the failure so that you are growing and moving forward.
- Reassure your child that it is actually important to learn to 'fail forward' and well, and that failure is one of the best ways we learn from our mistakes.
- Try activities such as: baking a cake, building a rabbit hutch, meeting new neighbours. These are all things children can learn to do that may be outside their comfort zone, but that give them an opportunity to try new skills and take risks in a safe and supported environment.
- Play age-appropriate but challenging and complex games with your child. Games are a good way to teach your child to become comfortable with failing or losing. Resist the temptation to let your child win, though, as this can be a perfect opportunity for your child to learn resilience.

It is important to recognise that culturally diverse groups may understand success differently. If you feel you need extra support in helping your child develop a growth mindset from a culturally appropriate perspective, it may help to find a trusted adult or mentor from your cultural context who can have some of these conversations with your child.

Related questions: [Why does my child tend to choose easy work at school?](#), [What can I do at home to help my child to be the best they can be?](#), [How do I get my child to stop thinking they have to do everything perfectly/ first time?](#)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

Key Words

Ability grouping: grouping students of similar ability for learning and teaching

Acceleration: progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than conventional

Asynchronous development: two or more aspects of development that do not exist or happen at the same time

DET: Department of Education and Training Victoria

Differentiation: Differentiation of the curriculum means varying the curriculum content, the way your child is taught, what they produce and the learning environment.

Disengagement: often used to label the state of students who have withdrawn emotionally, intellectually and sometimes physically from their learning at school

Enrichment: enhancing a child's learning by increasing breadth and depth of the curriculum, rather than advancing them through the curriculum (which is called acceleration)

Failing forward: learning to accept failure and learn from it for the purposes of growth and development

Growth mindset: an approach to growth and development where individuals believe they can grow their capacity through effort, persistence and a mindset that sees failure and mistakes as a way to learn. This phrase was made famous by Dr Carol Dweck.

IEP/ILP/PLPs: Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans or Personalised Learning Plans are documents which help teachers, parents, students and other professionals put strategies, goals and plans in place to ensure a child's learning needs are met.

Imposter syndrome: when a person feels the pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, having self-doubt, and thinking they need to prove their giftedness, otherwise people will think they are an 'imposter' or a fraud

Iowa scales: a paper-based scale for helping schools and families make effective decisions about accelerating a child

Pre-service teachers: university students who are training to become teachers, either through a Bachelor of Education or a Master of Education or Teaching

Standardised assessment: testing that has standardised measures, processes and outcomes, with the purpose of measuring ability and achievement

SEAL: Select Entry Accelerated Learning schools or programs focus specifically on students with high ability. There are usually standardised assessments interested students take in order to qualify for enrolment.

Streaming: full-time grouping within particular subjects with students of similar abilities i

Student Excellence Program: an initiative funded by the Victorian Government to support the teaching and learning of high ability students in government schools

Supported failure approach: an approach to parenting, training or educating that allows for failure in a supportive environment, recognising that failure can lead to growth and success if managed well

VAGTC: Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children

VCAL: Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, which is completed by students instead of the VCE. This is a trades-based pathway.

VCE: Victorian Certificate of Education, which is usually completed by students in Years 11 and 12 in Victoria who would like to follow a university pathway

VET: Vocational Education and Training, which is a course that is designed to give students knowledge and specific practical skills that will help them in the workplace. Year 11 and 12 students can complete a VET course as part of their **VCE/VCAL**.

VHAP: Victorian High Ability Program, funded by the Victorian Government to support high ability students in government schools, through the **Student Excellence Program**

Victorian Challenge and Enrichment Series: an initiative by the Victorian Government which gives Prep - Year 12 students in government schools the opportunity to participate in funded enrichment and extension activities outside of their regular classrooms

Useful Links

Acceleration:

- *A Nation Deceived/Empowered* (acceleration study): http://www.accelerationinstitute.org/Nation_Deceived/Get_Report.aspx
- *Iowa Scales* (acceleration scales): <https://www.accelerationinstitute.org/tools/ias.aspx>

Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET):

- *High Ability Toolkit:* <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/high-ability-toolkit/Pages/high-ability-toolkit.aspx>
- *Student Excellence Program:* <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-resource-package-srp-targeted-initiatives/guidance/student-excellence-program>

Gagné: Building Gifts into Talents: Brief Overview of the DMGT 2.0

https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b64a15_d990e509038044d6a59b648bb9e2c472.pdf

GERRIC: Gifted Education Research, Resource, and Information Centre:

- *Information:* <https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/gerric>
- *Extension Module:* <https://www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/our-schools/education/professional-learning/gerric-gifted-education/resources/professional-development-package-teachers>

Imposter Syndrome: <https://www.apa.org/gradpsych/2013/11/fraud>

Music education and teen academic achievement:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/the-athletes-way/201906/music-participation-is-linked-teens-academic-achievement>

VAGTC Resource Book: <https://www.vagtc.org.au/product/vagtc-resource-book-8th-edition/>

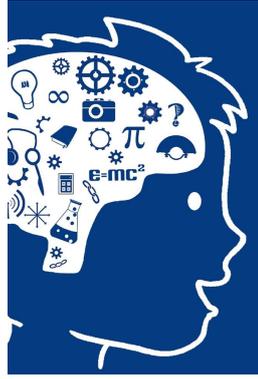
Further Reading

Gagné, F. (2004). Transforming gifts into talents: The DMGT as a developmental theory. *High Ability Studies*, 15(2), 119–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359813042000314682>

Maker, C. J. (1982). *Teaching models in the education of the gifted*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Tomlinson, C.A. & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Virginia.





4. How do I communicate with my child's school?

School-home relationships can be very powerful supports for you and your whole family. Particularly as the parent of a gifted child, you and your child's teachers can build a positive and productive relationship. This can be very beneficial to your child's learning and experience of school. Be encouraged that teachers and parents working together with openness, respect and an awareness of what knowledge each brings to this support team, can have a significant impact on your child's education and future.

a Is it OK to speak up for my gifted child?

It is not only OK, but it is a very important part of your role as a parent to help your child by speaking up for and with them. You can help ensure that they:

- Are happy and making progress with their learning at school.
- Are being appropriately taught and challenged.
- Have the confidence to speak up for themselves.
- Feel valued by their teachers and their peers.

b I am keen on working cooperatively with my child's teacher/s. What advice can you give me?

Working with a team is always more effective than working alone because a team of parents and teachers with a common goal can have a significant impact on a child's growth and learning. It is a good idea to get in early with cooperating with your child's teacher, so that you can establish a positive relationship early on.

When collaborating with your child's teachers:

- Actively look for opportunities to thank the teachers and the school for what they do for their students.

- Have a clear idea of your purpose: what are you hoping to achieve in your communication with the teacher?
- Have confidence in the knowledge that you bring to the table because it is really important and useful.
- Be willing to listen to what the teachers have to say too, as teacher perspectives may be different from your own.
- Ask lots of questions and give honest answers. Being open, frank, and honest in a respectful and mature way will set you up well to have your needs met as well as to help the teacher in their important role.
- Respect time limitations: teachers have many demands on them each day.
- Recognise the power of body language: a smiling face, clear eye contact, open and relaxed arms, a friendly tone of voice and undivided attention are all signals of positive engagement.
- Follow up on advice given to you by the teacher.
- Keep a record of what was discussed and decided so that you can revisit for progress checks in the future.
- Write a letter of thanks and highlight the progress you have made after each meeting with the teacher.
- Be mindful that it may take more than one visit to the school to solve a problem.

c What do I need to know when talking to my child's teachers?

Communicating with your child's teacher/s can be a very positive and productive experience. You both form an important part of the team that is supporting your child through their schooling journey. Some good things to know and/or bring when you talk with your child's teachers are:

- What you are trying to achieve by talking with the teachers. If you have a very clear purpose, it will be easier to communicate this.
- Your child's needs/interests/characteristics/challenges. For example: your child might need to work with like minded children more often, or might be needing greater challenge in Maths. Remember that wellbeing is as important as academics. In fact, academics are supported by good wellbeing.
- What your child can do, supported by evidence. For example: previous years' reports, exams, awards, community and sporting successes, and collections/portfolios of work that show your child's interests and abilities.

- Any results and recommendations from assessments that have been done, including reports from psychologists and other professionals.
- Any useful articles or resources you have found about gifted and high ability children that you think relate to your child and their success at school.

You can trust that your child's teacher is working hard to support your child and all of their classmates.

There are many organisations that can help you to find reading materials and give you advice about working with teachers. There are also parent groups and parent networks that you can join to share what you and other parents and teachers know about gifted education and gifted children. *Related question: [What are the benefits to parents in belonging to a gifted network?](#)*

d How can I collaborate with my child's teachers to build my child's self-esteem and resilience?

Schools are asked by the national and state curriculum bodies to work on [social and emotional learning \(SEL\)](#) with their students. There are clear guidelines as part of the '[Personal and Social Capabilities](#)' curriculum in Australian schools. These guidelines include working on confidence and resilience.

If you have concerns about your child's self esteem and resilience, and would like to work more closely with your child's teachers, it is a good idea to make a time to meet with them. You can then discuss the strategies and messages you agree to both be using in communicating with your child. Some suggested resilience builders are:

- The learning journey is as important as the result: I don't have to get everything right first time, and I don't have to get the best results or the highest marks. If I am learning and growing, and stretching myself, this is really good.
- It is important to feel the freedom to make mistakes, as this is one of the best ways we learn. *Related question: [What can I do at home to help my child to be the best they can be?](#)*
- I can learn to be OK in [the Learning Pit](#): Learning needs to be challenging and should require effort if I am going to progress and build new skills and knowledge.
- Knowing a lot or being good at some things does not mean that I have to be better than others at everything. Others can learn from me and I can learn from them. *Related section: [What are the Joys, Opportunities and Challenges of Parenting a Gifted Child?](#)*
- Everyone has good ideas to contribute. I can respect the views and opinions of those around me. Someone might have a good idea that I have not thought of before, and I can learn from them.
- I can have the confidence to share my ideas and opinions with others too.

e Does it sound like bragging if I tell teachers what my child can do?

Communicating with teachers about what your child can do is not bragging, it is simply giving them important information they might not have. It is helpful to remember that:

- You know your child and spend more time with your child than others do, so you see their capabilities.
- You know both their strengths and weaknesses.
- You know that they need support, the right environment, and appropriate challenges to reach towards living out their potential.

If you are worried that you might be coming across as bragging, you might like to ask yourself these questions:

- Am I calm and grateful when I approach the conversation with the teacher?
- What is my purpose or intention in telling the teacher this piece of information about my child? Am I trying to prove that my child is 'better' than other students, or am I simply wanting the teacher to know how to support my child and their learning journey better?
- Am I expecting the teacher to know things about my child that they can't know unless I tell them?
- Am I offering to support the teacher in their work with my child, or am I expecting them to do everything?
- Is there anything else I can do, say or think of to help my child and their teacher?



f What evidence can I provide to the school to show my child is gifted?

One way of getting evidence that your child is gifted is to have them assessed by a psychologist. Examples of the most commonly used tests are WISC-V for ages above 6, and WPPSI for ages 2-6. These tests:

- Are given by psychologists
- Measure your child's thinking, reasoning, and processing skills

- Can be used to work out your child's IQ (level of intelligence)

There are a variety of other [assessments](#) that can be administered by teachers or other staff in schools. They:

- Measure what your child has learned so far at school.
- Compare your child with students of similar age and grade.
- Indicate areas of strength and areas where they need support.

Other forms of evidence can be:

- Provide [parent, teacher and peer observational checklists](#) that can be used to identify characteristics of a gifted child.
- Collect evidence of your child's abilities and achievements in the form of portfolios of their work, previous reports, awards and involvement in community and school activities.
- Also ask your child's school what they can do to find out if your child is gifted or is a high ability child

Related questions: [What are the differences between teacher assessment of my child and the intelligence tests administered by psychologists?](#), [So how do I know if my child is gifted?](#)

g Will my gifted child succeed at school without help or special programs?

Gifted and highly able children need support to learn and grow to their capacity, just like all other children. In particular, though, gifted children need support to:

- Develop their strengths.
- Find ways to address their challenges.
- Develop the specific skills they need, in order to become confident and successful adults.
- Have their unique needs met in a way that honours them as individuals and provides them with the support and strategies they need to succeed. Because of the complexities of [twice exceptionality](#), 2e children need additional support from their parents/caregivers as well as school teachers and other support professionals. *Related question: [What are some ideas for what can be done at school to help my 2e child thrive?](#), Related resource: [What are my school's obligations under the legislation?](#)*
- Build the resilience and problem-solving skills that will serve them well when they encounter challenges while at school and after they leave school.
- Avoid becoming [disengaged](#), frustrated or disruptive. *Related question: [What do I do if my child becomes disengaged?](#)*

- Avoid underachievement or school refusal. *Related question: [My child is performing far below his ability at school. What can I do to help?](#)*
- Avoid feeling misunderstood or that their opinions are not respected.
- Learn and practise critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration.
- Apply their creativity and innovation skills.
- Have opportunities to apply their skills, follow their interests, and reach their goals.
- Grow into mature individuals who know how to use their talents to enrich the lives of those around them.

While your child will benefit from special programs for gifted children, such programs are not available in every school. If you are concerned that your child is missing out on important opportunities to develop these skills and to have supported growth as a gifted child, ask the school what they can provide within their regular offerings for all students.

h My child says that he would like more challenging school work. What can I do?

Every child needs support to grow into maturity, and the type of support your child needs might just be different to other children. Teachers will know the theory about a child's [Zone of Proximal Development \(ZPD\)](#), which is the zone where they are experiencing appropriate challenge with support. This is ideally where each child should be working.

It is also particularly important that children have the chance to find [flow](#) in their learning experiences. **Flow** is the term used to describe a state of being where an individual is totally immersed in what they are doing, and loses track of time and other external factors such as noise, distractions and discomfort.

If they are not working in their **ZPD** or are not finding **flow**, many gifted and high ability children will stop working to their best ability because they feel that the learning opportunities are not challenging or stimulating enough, or because they already know how to do the work that they are given. If this happens your child may:

- Feel misunderstood or dishonoured
- Misbehave
- Stop working as well as they could
- Stop asking questions or contributing in class learning times
- Underachieve
- Lose their interest and motivation for learning

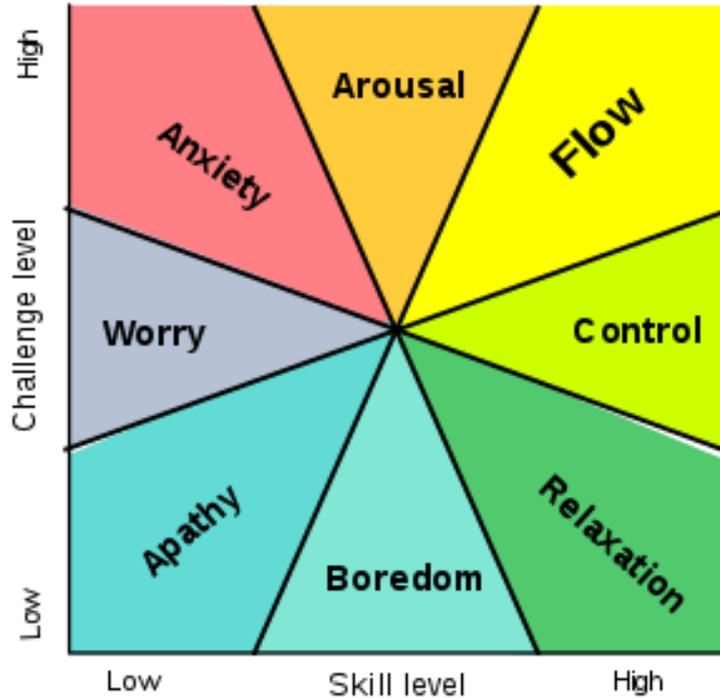


Image: <https://crookedchimneydesigns.com/flow/>

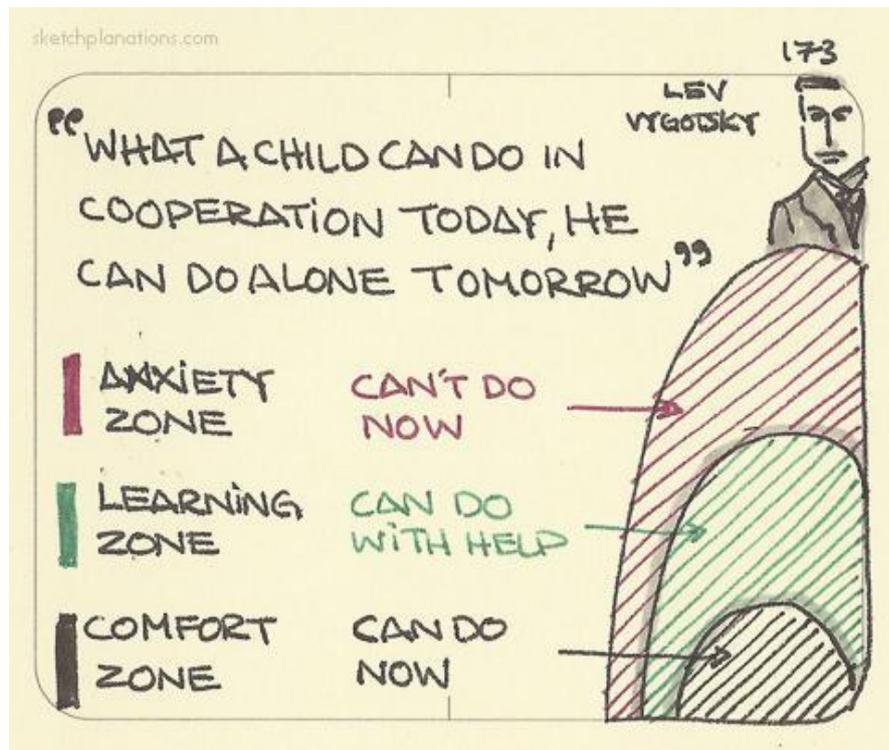


Image: <https://sketchplanations.com/zone-of-proximal-development>

If you notice that your child is not working as well as they could or seems to be lacking appropriate challenge with their learning, you can:

- Approach the teachers and negotiate for your child to have an *Individual Learning Plan*. You can set goals together so that your child's learning needs can be met strategically. *Related questions: [What will a PSG/ILP do to help my child?](#), [How are gifted and high ability children catered for in the regular classroom?](#), along with other questions from Section 3 [What can be done at school to make sure my gifted child's needs are being met?](#).*
- Teach your child to advocate for themselves. Depending on your child's age, you can teach them how to openly and respectfully talk with their teachers about the level of challenge they would like in their classroom/subject. *Self-advocacy* (speaking up for yourself) is a very important skill to develop in children. If your child learns to communicate effectively with their teachers about what they need and would like with their learning, this will be a huge advantage to them as they continue their educational journey.

Further resources: [What is 'flow'?](#), [8 Ways to create 'flow' according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#), [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Flow - Pursuit of Happiness](#)

i Why is my child not showing teachers at school what they can really do?

Sometimes a gifted child may not show what they are capable of at school. This might be a conscious decision they are making, or it might be that they simply cannot show what they can really do for some reason:

- Some gifted children hide their abilities in order to be accepted by other children and not seem different. This is called the *Forced Choice Dilemma* and is very common in gifted children. *Related question: [Are the common myths about gifted children true?](#)*
- A child may not want to go to school if they think that they are not liked or if they are being teased or bullied. Some gifted children experience feelings of isolation or not fitting in because they are different to their same-age peers. This may make them underperform. *Related question: [My child is performing far below his ability at school. What can I do to help?](#)*
- Teachers might be asking your child to do something they find very challenging. This may be part of their *asynchronous profile*, where they are good at some things but not others, and may cause them to feel like a failure. This may then lead to not working as hard in other areas they are good at. Some gifted children expect themselves to be brilliant at everything they do, and struggle with *imposter* feelings when an area they are not good at is identified.
- Teachers might also be asking your child to do something they find irrelevant, boring or pointless. Gifted children often struggle to engage with learning experiences they don't find purposeful and can't see the bigger picture for.
- Your child also might have knowledge and skills that go beyond what the teacher is asking of the students. A teacher who recognises what a child knows and can do and

responds to this in their teaching will have more success in drawing out a child's true capability.

If you are the parent of a child who is from a different culture or from a non-English speaking background:

- Share information about your child's culture, hopes, interests and expectations.
- Encourage teachers to be aware of things that may happen at school which may make it hard for your child to show their giftedness, such as language barriers, social interactions or cultural or religious traditions which make it difficult to participate in certain activities and events.
- Ask teachers to consider how identifying your child's needs might unlock their ability.

If you are concerned about your child not showing what they know and can do, go and speak to the teacher. Together you may be able to put strategies and goals into place that will help your child feel motivated and engaged in their learning, so that they can show the teacher what you see at home.

j How will I know if a school is the right one for my child?

Before choosing a school for your gifted child, check the schools in your area to see what each school can offer. Different schools offer different ways of teaching and learning. You need to think about whether the way the school teaches and what they teach at that school will be right for your child. You can:

- Ask to meet the teachers and the principal to discuss your child's needs.
- Ask about what the school does to help children with special needs, including learning needs that exist because of high ability.
- Ask what enrichment and extension programs are offered in the school. *Related question: [What enrichment programs could be offered to my child at school?](#)*

Find out what you can about how the school uses 'best practice'. Questions you can ask include:

- Do they have a whole school definition of gifted education and a gifted education policy?
- Do the teachers have training in gifted education?
- Do teachers teach in a variety of different ways to suit different children's needs and learning preferences?
- Does the school have processes for analysing students' results and talking with students about how they can use these results as goal-setting and improvement tools?

Related section: [What can be done at school to ensure my gifted child's needs are being met?](#)

k How can I support my child's school to offer the best possible program?

Some schools have established programs for gifted and high ability students, and some schools have never offered this service. If you have some good ideas for what your child's school could do in this area:

- Be aware that it is not uncommon for [many people to think that gifted children will do well without help](#). You can help by providing information and perspectives on the importance of supporting gifted and high ability children in their educational journeys. Talk to your child's teacher about ideas you might have that could provide valuable learning opportunities for your child and other gifted children. *Related questions: [Are the common myths about gifted children true?](#), [Will my gifted child succeed at school without help or special programs?](#)*
- Be supportive by offering to put the teacher/school administration in touch with people and organisations that can help them to find resources, enrichment programs and professional development opportunities. This will support them in catering for gifted and high ability children. Gifted associations such as the **AAEGT** (Australian Association for Education of Gifted and Talented) or **VAGTC** (Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children) and subject associations such as **MAV** (Mathematics Association of Victoria), **VATE** (Victorian Association for the Teaching of English), **STAV** (Science Teachers' Association of Victoria) and **HTAV** (History Teachers' Association of Victoria) can put you in touch with these essential services.
- An active parent group might suggest options and provide support for the school to get programs started. You could get involved in such a group.

If possible, make yourself known to the school by getting involved in school initiatives that benefit all students and families. These might include:

- School Council
- Parents and Friends (P&F) committees
- Fundraising
- School based social and sporting clubs
- School based interest and extension activities

If you have the time, offer to:

- Be a tutor or mentor.

- Organise meetings of special interest groups. This will enable you to meet a variety of people with similar interests and concerns.
- Get involved in raising awareness about the needs of all children in the school including gifted and high ability children.
- Find ways those needs can be met at a school community level.

Offer to establish a group of volunteers to:

- Set up clubs and extension activities and competitions.
- Find mentors and tutors who are experts and can help with special projects.
- Organise activities likely to attract more able children and advertise them through the school newsletter.

Try to find an 'ally' at the school. These may include:

- Other parents and teachers with an interest in gifted education
- The school principal or school leaders.

Related question: [Where do I find other parents of gifted children?](#)

Key Words

AAEGT: Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented

Assessment tools: testing that has standardised measures, processes and outcomes, for the sake of measuring ability and achievement

Asynchronous development: two or more aspects of development that do not exist or happen at the same time

Disengagement: often used to label the state of students who have withdrawn emotionally, intellectually and sometimes physically from their learning at school

Flow: a theory developed by positive psychology expert [Mihály Csíkszentmihályi](#), describing a state of mind where an individual is completely absorbed in what they are doing and loses track of time, distractions, discomfort and other external factors

Forced Choice Dilemma: perceiving a need to choose between being socially accepted, or achieving highly in academic disciplines

IEP/ILP/PLPs: Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans or Personalised Learning Plans are documents which help teachers, parents, students and other professionals put strategies, goals and plans in place to ensure a child's learning needs are met.

Imposter syndrome: when a person feels the pressure to excel, accompanied by other concerns such as feeling different, having self-doubt, and thinking they need to prove their giftedness, otherwise people will think they are an 'imposter' or a fraud

Learning Pit: a concept and graphic copyrighted by James Nottingham that explains the importance of appropriate challenge to growth and learning in order to achieve success

Observational checklists: checklists that can be completed by parents, teachers and other professionals that show characteristics of giftedness observed in a child

Personal and Social Capability: a focus of the Victorian curriculum that prioritises the development of students' personal, emotional, social and relational skills

SEL: Social and Emotional Learning, which is development of skills and capabilities in children and youth for resilience, intrapersonal understanding and interpersonal or social success

Self-advocacy: speaking up for yourself and what is important to you

Underachievement: not performing or achieving at a level that reflects an individual's innate ability or potential

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development: refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner. 'Proximal' refers to those skills that the learner is 'close' to mastering. This idea comes from educational psychologist and theorist Vygostky and is a popular way for teachers to think about how to target a student's capacity and learning needs.

Useful Links

AAEGT: <https://www.aaegt.net.au/>

Flow: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-flow-2794768>, <https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi/>,
<https://positivepsychology.com/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi-father-of-flow/>

Learning Pit: <https://www.challenginglearning.com/learning-pit/>

NCCD Disability Standards for Education and school provisions:

<https://www.nccd.edu.au/wider-support-materials/what-are-my-schools-obligations-under-legislation?parent=/understanding-nccd&activity=/wider-support-materials/what-nccd&step=1>

Personal and Social Capability (Australian Curriculum):

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/personal-and-social-capability/>

VAGTC:

- Information: <http://www.vagtc.org.au>
- VISION magazine: <https://www.vagtc.org.au/product/vagtc-resource-book-8th-edition/>

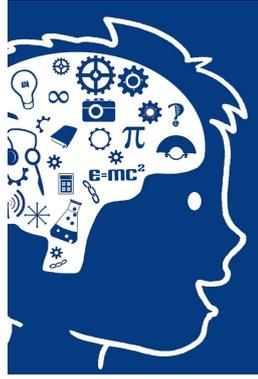
Further Reading

Clark, B. (2008) *Understanding the gifted learner* in Growing Up Gifted. Upper Saddle River, N.J. Merrill/Prentice Hall, c2002.

Porter, L. (1999). *Gifted Young Children, A Guide for Teachers and Parents*. Open University Press.

Rivero, L. (2010). *Smart teens' guide to living with intensity: How to get more out of life and learning*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------



5 What can I do at home to help my gifted child?

You as parents play a vital and significant role in the growth and development of your child. It is important to recognise that 'it takes a village to raise a child', and every significant person in your child's life has a unique contribution. There are some things that you can do specifically to support your child.

a How can I create a supportive environment at home?

The home environment is very important in your child's life. Home is where children are encouraged, nurtured and challenged in a safe setting. A strong supportive relationship with those closest to you fosters a healthy mind and a healthy approach to life. Ways you can create a supportive environment in your home include:

- Letting your child know that they are loved just because they are your child.
- Constantly reminding your child that you're glad they are in your family.
- Celebrating the fact that your child is gifted, rather than feeling like you have to hide it.
- Teaching them about and highlighting their **strengths**. You can do online strengths profiling activities together as a family, such as the [Values in Action Character Strengths Survey](#).
- Finding opportunities to do fun things together as a family.
- Spending 'special time' alone with your child one on one.
- Taking opportunities to talk about ways in which your child might be finding their giftedness challenging.
- Creating opportunities for your child to develop their social skills. This could be with children who think and interact with the world like they do, or quite differently.
- Avoiding comparing their achievement, behaviour or abilities to other children or other family members.

- Teaching them the values and character traits that are important to you and your family, as well as to society: help them to become responsible, reliable, patient, and considerate of others.

b What can I do at home to help my child to be the best they can be?

One of the common myths about gifted individuals is that they think they are 'better' than others around them. We can help our children to recognise that an important part of being gifted is to find ways to use their giftedness to make a difference to the lives of others and to help to make the world a better place. You can encourage your child to develop a healthy and positive mindset towards life and others as well as to their learning. Psychologist and researcher Carol S. Dweck tells us that our *mindset* can determine how we approach and deal with challenges in life. We learn *mindset* from important others such as parents, teachers, coaches and people with whom we have strong relationships. Dweck suggests that there are two types of mindsets:

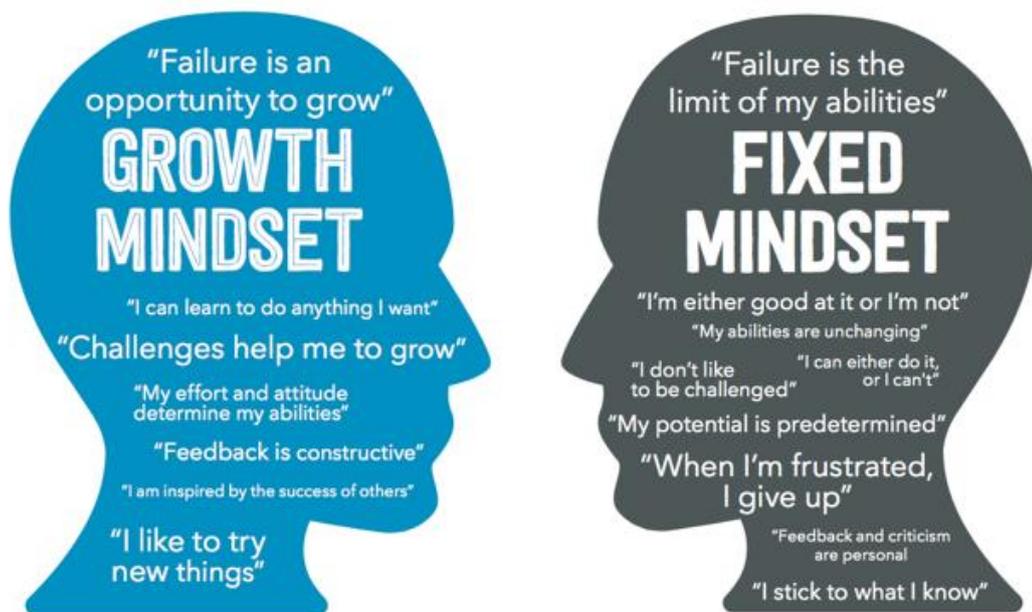


Image: <https://medium.com/leadership-motivation-and-impact/fixed-v-growth-mindset-902e7d0081b3>

A **fixed mindset** is when we view our abilities as unchangeable, and your child may:

- Develop a sense of entitlement because they are used to having things come naturally and not having to work hard for success as a young child.
- Feel they have to prove to themselves and others that they are 'smart' and already good at everything.
- See failure as a sign that they are not 'smart' or talented.

- Struggle to see the value in effort: 'If I need to work hard that means I'm not 'smart'.'

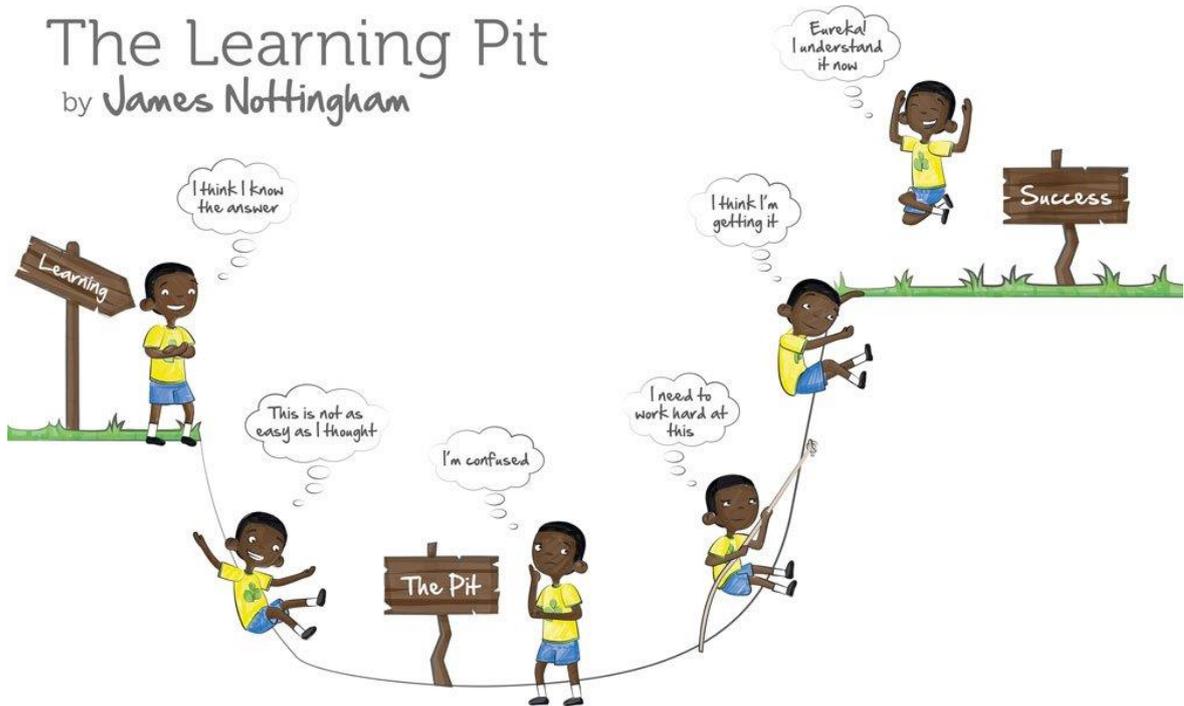
A **growth mindset** is when your child believes that the abilities they are born with are a starting point, and that they can make a difference by using their skills and abilities to benefit themselves and others.

To help your child develop a **growth mindset**, you can:

- Show your child the importance of empathy and care for others and for the world we live in. You can do this through modelling in your own life, as well as through conversations with them.
- Help them to understand that just because they may know a lot and they can learn quickly, it doesn't mean that they're better than others. Your child's gifts can help make the world a better place in some way.
- Help your child understand that it is not only OK to make mistakes, but it is a necessary part of learning and growth. Find bibliographies of well known people who have worked through failures and mistakes to find success and growth.
- Teach your child that worthwhile learning takes effort and time, even if they sometimes learn faster than their peers.
- Encourage your child to aim for excellence but remind them that they do not have to do everything perfectly every time.
- Explain to your child that *the learning journey* is as important as the result. Help your child set realistic expectations of themselves: in learning and in relationships, they may not get it right straight away or every time, and that is OK.
- Discuss the idea that wonderful learning takes place when we have to stretch our thinking beyond what we already know and can do.
- Help your child see the value in putting in effort, developing **grit** (perseverance) and showing determination, because this is what will bring reward. This is extremely important, as the research points to grit being more predictive of success than natural ability. *Related reference: [Angela Duckworth's 'Grit'](#).*
- Encourage them to take acceptable risks and to challenge themselves beyond their comfort zone: help them understand the value and importance of being in [the Learning Pit](#).
- Support your child's growth to independence by teaching them new skills, then supporting them as they try these skills on their own. For example, help them learn how to research online for information, research independently in libraries, think about people they could approach for help, or try to come up with their own research topics, questions, and resources.

- Encourage your child to explore things that interest them, and then show interest in their growth in these areas.
- Look for resources, tutors and mentors that have knowledge in your child's areas of interest.
- Encourage your child to get involved in learning and opportunities that are 'just for fun', rather than for achievement, feeling pressure to win, or having to be 'the best': enrichment activities, fun competitions, hobby groups and clubs.

The Learning Pit by James Nottingham



www.ChallengingLearning.com/LearningPit

Related question: [Why does my child tend to choose easy work at school?](#)



c How can I help my child to become more independent?

It is important for your child to develop their own sense of who they are and what they are capable of. Gifted children, like any children, can underestimate what they are capable and rely too heavily on those around them. You as parents can help them develop the skills and confidence they need for independence in thinking, learning and living. Some ways you can help develop these skills are:

- Allow increasing control of decision making and choice where possible.
- Teach time management and organizational skills.
- Praise the personal values you are trying to promote, for example, hard work, kindness, compassion, responsibility.
- Make it clear to your child that you are more interested in the process (their hard work, attitude, persistence, learning and growth) than the outcome (results, awards, achievements).
- Model a [growth mindset](#) and acceptance of mistakes, with a focus on what can be learned from experiences.
- Think about what is important in the long run and then ‘pick battles’ carefully. Too much conflict over small things can undermine your relationship, your child’s confidence, their motivation and their willingness to take more responsibility for themselves. If you need to, criticize privately. Gifted children are often sensitive about how they are perceived.
- Listen very carefully to your child and try to understand what is behind what they are saying or doing.
- Have open and supportive problem-solving conversations about new skills or initiatives that might be causing your child to feel stressed or worried.
- Have realistic expectations and work out what is appropriate for the age of your child. For example, they might not be able to read Shakespeare if they are still in junior primary school.
- Provide opportunities for your child to become involved in community service or action. This promotes a sense of contribution and of giving of ourselves to others.

d How can I help my child to develop their social skills?

Social interactions can be the source of a great deal of joy and growth for gifted children. They can also trigger feelings of isolation, anxiety and a sense of not belonging. You have a very important role to play in helping your child connect with others positively and well, both within and outside of the home. You can:

- Model and promote open-mindedness in your home. Don’t underestimate how powerful the example you set of accepting difference and valuing diversity is.
- Encourage your child to be respectful of others at all times, including when they come across individuals whose views are different to their own. This helps develop empathy and flexibility, and encourages a positive mindset.

- Show an interest in their social lives and invite open and non-judgemental conversations. This may include plenty of listening and some problem solving discussions. Ask questions such as: *Who are your friends? What do you like most about them? Who do you most enjoy hanging out with and why? Are there any issues you're experiencing with friendships? What/why? What could we try?*
- Have open and honest communication with the school and your child's teachers. Discuss your child's social and behaviour goals with your child's teachers, so that you can have consistent language and expectations between home and school.
- Look for opportunities to bring your child together with children of similar interests and abilities through participating in clubs, competitions and sporting associations.

It is also helpful to know that gifted children often have a heightened awareness of what is going on around them and may quickly pick up on differences between them and their classmates at school or friends outside of school. It can be useful to:

- Have conversations with your child about diversity of abilities, experiences and ideas.
- Help them recognise and value others' contributions and opinions, while feeling free to share their own.
- Focus on the strengths of wisdom and humility in dealing with others.
- Remind them that one good friend can be enough, and that they don't need to be best friends with everyone.

e What do I do about my child's meltdowns?

Meltdowns can be caused by a variety of triggers, and it can be difficult to understand why they are expressing such big emotions. Some strategies for dealing with meltdowns are:

In the home environment:

Creating a safe environment at home to talk openly about your child's experiences and feelings is very important. The key goal is to help your child to develop strategies so that they learn to self-regulate. This can be done through:

- Helping your child identify their strengths, and showing them how they could use their strengths to help in difficult situations.
- Providing time over a shared meal for family members to share stories and strategies of dealing with difficult emotions.
- Reading stories of well known or successful people who have found a way to harness their strengths and intensities to overcome difficulties and to become who they are today.

- Finding time for ‘happiness building’ projects in line with interests and strengths: doing things together that your child can look forward to and that foster enjoyment, happiness and strong relationships with family, friends, and mentors.
- Sharing your experiences with other parents of gifted children.
- Accessing professional help through a psychologist, counsellor or other avenue.

In the moment:

- Providing a special place at home for calming down
- Using stress balls and other tools like ‘worry beads’ to focus the negative energy. The idea is that they send their negative energy into the tool.

After the meltdown:

- Listening without judgement to your child sharing how they are feeling.
- Helping them label how they are feeling, as this is a proven [neuroscientific](#) strategy for helping the brain calm the body down.
- Setting aside dedicated time to ‘unpacking’ how your child is feeling, with the aim of understanding what they are going through and what has triggered the meltdown.

Related questions: [Is it normal for my child to sometimes get so intense that they have meltdowns?](#), [Where can I find other parents of gifted children?](#)

f How do I support my child’s development when they seem to be good at everything?

Some gifted children (not all) have [multipotentiality](#), which means that they have a variety of strengths and interests across different areas. This can be exciting but also confusing and exhausting for both you and your child. Trying to choose what to do with limited time, resources and energy can be a challenge, and your child may feel upset about missing out on opportunities to do things they love and are good at if they simply can’t find a way to fit everything in. Some helpful ideas include:

- Help your child understand that different ages and seasons in life will bring opportunities to pursue different interests and develop different gifts. Just because we can’t fit something into our lives right now doesn't mean that we will never be able to focus on that area.
- Think carefully about what you and your child (and family) have time, energy and resources for. ‘Less is more’ can be a helpful phrase to remember, particularly when children are tired from their school days.

- Work out together with your child what they are most interested in and what they would most enjoy. Choose those opportunities first that allow them to be involved in what they love.
- Encourage independence by allowing your child to make choices where appropriate.
- Prioritise curiosity and the love of learning over achievement and ‘winning’.
- Praise effort, diligence and perseverance over results or innate qualities such as intelligence and looks.
- Make sure your child has access to healthy challenge, so that they become comfortable with stretch, challenge and failure. There are many extension and enrichment programs available to help gifted children to further develop their talents in areas of strength and expertise. *Related questions and references:* [What can I do at home to help my child to be the best they can be?](#), [Why does my child tend to choose easy work at school?](#), [VAGTC Resource Book](#).
- Avoid fixing problems for them. Let them have a go at solving problems themselves and make yourself available to them to talk through what they are thinking and how it is working.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

g My child has so many things on the go that the house is always a junk heap. What should I do?

Your child could either be totally engrossed in, or overwhelmed by, the number of things they are trying to manage. They may not realise that their projects are taking over the house. [Twice exceptional](#) children may also have poor [executive function](#) and struggle to manage their time, space and belongings (*Related question:* [What might be some of the reasons that my gifted 2e child is not succeeding at school?](#); *Related section:* [What if my child is gifted but has a disability or challenges of some other sort?](#)). Be careful about assumptions you might be making when dealing with your child: if you assume they are being selfish or thoughtless and treat them in this way, this may lead to hard feelings and conflict. It is better to be clear and proactive when you see a problem arising:

- Explain that the house is not only their space, but also belongs to other family members.

- Negotiate ground rules for fair sharing of home spaces. This will help them feel that you are willing to listen to their needs and at the same time will encourage them to develop a sense of responsibility and cooperation.
- Identify and make family cleaning times part of the daily routine, which will involve all members of the family.
- Identify one or more rooms that your child can have as their special space.

Discuss the importance of:

- Keeping your word and your agreements.
- Meeting your commitments.
- Being a contributing member of the family.

Encourage your child to take responsibility by:

- Reminding them of the agreements that have been made and your expectations of them.
- Holding your child accountable for agreements they have made.
- Acknowledging and rewarding them for keeping to the agreements they have made.
- Helping them set limits to the amount of space they take up.
- Encouraging your child to give back to the family in some way, perhaps through volunteering to do certain chores on top of what they already do.
- Setting and following through with consequences, including saying **no** if they exceed what has been agreed to.

h What out of school programs should my child do?

The best out of school programs for your child are ones that will allow them to:

- Explore their passions and interests
- Pursue their hobbies
- Enable them to build their skills and knowledge

These activities may include:

- Sporting and creative activities
- Clubs and competitions

- Additional studies or tutoring

There is no limit to the number of activities your child can do after school, but it is very important that you and your child choose carefully what to commit to. Children can easily become tired, overwhelmed, stressed and resentful if they are too busy. All children need plenty of time to simply play, rest, daydream and enjoying being a child.

The best ways to find out of school programs are by:

- Googling 'out of school activities for children' in your area.
- Searching on your local library and council's web pages.
- Asking friends and family members what their children have enjoyed participating in.
- Asking your school and other schools close to you about the programs they offer.
- Looking in the [VAGTC Resource Book](#).

Some suggested activities in and around Melbourne include:

- Visiting the Melbourne Zoo or Healesville Sanctuary, the Melbourne Art Gallery, the State Library of Victoria, Scienceworks, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, the Melbourne Museum or a local museum or gallery near you.
- Exploring recreational activities across Victoria such as Puffing Billy, the Ashcombe Maze, local theatre groups or chess clubs.
- Participating in school holiday programs offered by all local councils and most primary schools; there are usually a variety of activities for all areas of interest.

i Should I be sending my child to extra tutoring?

It is always a good idea to ask yourself why you are putting certain opportunities in place for your child. Extra tutoring can be helpful if:

- The learning is child-centered, which means the desire to learn comes from the child, not the parent.
- Your child is interested in intense study which stimulates their mind beyond the normal offerings in the school curriculum.
- The tutoring helps your child to flourish intellectually because it provides them with an opportunity to learn more about a topic of interest or be challenged further.

- Your child needs additional support, recognising that not all gifted children have high ability in every area of learning. This is called [asynchrony](#) and is common in gifted individuals.

When deciding whether to provide extra tutoring for your gifted child, it is important to consider whether:

- The extra tutoring serves a need or interest of the child.
- It is provided because the child cannot access that subject at his/her normal school.
- The extra workload will help and encourage your child, or whether it will overburden them or make them feel extra pressure.

j I learned Mathematics in another country, and I am not sure whether I should help my child with Mathematics at home because Mathematics is different in English, and they do things differently in Australian schools.

There are multiple ways of thinking about problems and understanding the nature of numbers.

- As long as your child knows which language or systems they are working in, they will benefit from having access to multiple ways of understanding and approaching mathematical ideas and processes.
- If you were taught a certain way, there is validity in that method. You will also be better equipped to help your child if you understand the concept thoroughly.
- Different approaches can benefit rather than impede your child's learning and mathematical growth.

k How do I help my child with career guidance?

Some children show very early signs of interest in particular careers. Even if they are very young, your child might already be talking about what they would like to do with their future in terms of further studies and career pathway choices. Research shows that early exposure to positive and progressive ideas about what children could do with their careers has a big impact on what they end up doing (*see [Careers and the Holland Model](#)*). You as the parent have a very important role to play in helping your child, no matter how old they are, to think about themselves as a future professional and as an individual who has gifts to share with the world. You can:

- Show interest in what your child is telling you about their hopes and dreams for the future. Be curious rather than judgemental about their ideas.

- Ask questions of your child that might help them to think about their growth and learning, as well as about a purpose for their lives beyond themselves. For example, if your child is saying they would like to be a football player, you could ask them questions such as:
 - *What do you love so much about football?*
 - *What are you good at that would make you a good football player?*
 - *What do you think you would need to learn or improve if you were going to be selected for a team you wanted to play for?*
 - *What would you like to achieve as a football player?*
 - *How could you make other people's lives better by becoming a football player?*
- Have conversations with your child about what they like, what motivates them and how they know they are being successful.
- Constantly call out your child's **strengths** as you see them in action in everyday life. *Related question and resource: [How can I create a supportive environment at home? The Strength Switch.](#)*
- Do some creative brainstorming together with your family about 'My Future Possible Self': what could I be doing a number of years from now, and what will I need to do to get there?
- Find ways of giving your child the opportunity to spend time with adults who are working in the field your child is interested in.
- Reassure your child that there is time to make career choices. They don't need to know what career pathway they would like to follow by a certain age. It is becoming common for adults to have multiple career pathways and there are always options to explore.

For older children, encourage conversations with the school's careers advisor. They can get to know your child and can help them identify the type of career that might be a good fit for them and their skills, interests and abilities. A careers advisor can also help your child to:

- Identify their strengths, skills, values and beliefs.
- Choose a career pathway that has meaning and purpose.
- Learn about work environments where your child's gifted characteristics will naturally thrive.
- Explore unconventional career options and career combinations.
- Choose a career that will enable them to avoid boredom and to find challenges to keep them engaged.

- Gain clarity and direction about what is involved in possible career choices.
- Provide personalised support and guidance.
- Avoid being overwhelmed by the number of choices available.
- Teach your child how to research career information effectively and efficiently.
- Help your child to identify possible options via career assessment tools.
- Provide information about the current labour market in Australia in your child's area of interest.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

Key Words

Asynchronous development: two or more aspects of development that do not exist or happen at the same time

Executive function: functions of the brain (mental skills) that control our behaviour: proficiency in adaptable thinking, planning, self-monitoring, self-control, working memory, time management, and organization

Fixed mindset: the opposite of a growth mindset; a fixed mindset sees intelligence and ability as fixed and unchangeable, and fears failure and mistakes

Grit: a term coined by Angela Duckworth to describe a person's willingness to apply passion and perseverance to natural ability in order to achieve success

Growth mindset: an approach to growth and development where individuals believe they can grow their capacity through effort, persistence and a mindset that sees failure and mistakes as a way to learn. This phrase was made famous by Dr Carol Dweck.

Learning Pit: a concept and graphic copyrighted by James Nottingham that explains the importance of appropriate challenge to growth and learning in order to achieve success

Multipotentiality: the ability for a person to excel in two or more different fields or areas

Neuroscientific: relating to the science of the brain and how it functions

Strengths-based approach: focusing on a person's strengths, rather than their deficits, and helping them use their strengths to address their deficits for optimal development

Twice exceptional (2e): simultaneously having one or more areas of giftedness with one or more disabling conditions (physical, academic, social, emotional, psychological); also called dual/double exceptional

Useful Links

Bored at school and academically gifted: <https://www.centervention.com/bored-at-school/>

Careers and the Holland Model: <https://www.careers.govt.nz/assets/pages/docs/career-theory-model-holland.pdf>, <https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/career/documents/holland-code-sparks.pdf>

Exceptionally gifted children: <https://www.giftedkids.ie/homesupport.html>,
<https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents>

Grit scale: <https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale/>

Growth mindset: https://www.shortform.com/summary/mindset-the-new-psychology-of-success-summary-carol-dweck?gclid=Cj0KCQjws4aKBhDPArisAIWH0JW3-PgPmcA85q5nCJOultutN44XlzMeNUmR2J4ro74PWCC0MrTeZcQaAhzTEALw_wcB

Social and Emotional Needs support: www.SENGifted.org

VAGTC Resource Book: <https://www.vagtc.org.au/product/vagtc-resource-book-8th-edition/>

General resources for parents of gifted children:

- NAGC: www.NAGC.org
- Davidson Gifted: www.DavidsonGifted.org
- Hoagies Gifted: www.hoagiesgifted.org
- Raising Children: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/search?query=gifted>
- AAEGT: http://www.aaegt.net.au/?page_id=786

Further reading

Clark, B. (2008). Understanding the gifted learner in *Growing Up Gifted*. Upper Saddle River, N.J. Merrill/Prentice Hall, c2002.

Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: the power of passion and perseverance*. First Scribner hardcover edition. New York, NY: Scribner.

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House.

Morelock, M., (1992). *Giftedness: the view from within*. Understanding our gifted, 4(3), 1, 11-15.

Porter, L. (1999). *Gifted Young Children, A Guide for Teachers and Parents*. Open University Press.

Rivero, L. (2010). *Smart teens' guide to living with intensity: How to get more out of life and learning*. Scottsdale, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Silverman, L.K., (1992). *How Parents Can Support Gifted Children*. Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse, 1992, ERIC Digest; E515, Washington D.C.

Waters, L. (2017). *The Strength Switch*. North Sydney, NSW : Penguin Random House Australia.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------



6. What if my child is gifted but also has a disability or other challenges?

Twice Exceptionality (2e):

advanced abilities and lagging skills

a What is Twice or Dual Exceptionality?

Some gifted students can also have difficulties or challenges in other areas that make their learning and success much more difficult to achieve. This is called [twice exceptional \(2e\)](#), dual exceptionalism or doubly-labeled. The reason for these labels is that a 2e child will have an exceptional gift in one area (for example, Maths, reading, music, art, leadership) as well as an exceptional challenge in a different area. This challenge could be learning, social, emotional, physical or behavioural:

- A specific learning disability in areas such as reading, spelling, writing or mathematics. This could include diagnoses of [dyscalculia](#) (challenges with numbers), [dysgraphia](#) (challenges with writing) or [dyslexia](#) (challenges with reading).
- Physical disabilities that cause challenges with learning: hearing or vision impairment, or physical impairment such as quadriplegia.
- Learning challenges because of language barriers: [English as an Additional Language \(EAL\)](#)
- A [neurodiversity](#) diagnosis: ADHD, autism spectrum. Neurodiversity refers to the fact that brain differences are normal and that people with such differences can experience and interpret the world in unique ways.
- A diagnosed mental health concern: anxiety, depression, eating disorders.

2e children typically have very [asynchronous developmental profiles](#), because the strengths are often very strong and the challenges are often very challenging. An important perspective to have when supporting 2e children is to see the child for their strengths, and then support them in strengthening their weaknesses.

*See the child for their strengths,
and then support them
in strengthening their weaknesses.*

[Research from NAGC](#) (National Association for Gifted Children, USA) suggests that up to six percent of the total school population in America is twice exceptional. It is not unusual for 2e children to find school a difficult place:

- Gifted twice exceptional students are often difficult to identify. Their difficulty, rather than their gifted knowledge, is often the focus of assessment. The characteristics of giftedness are frequently hidden by low levels of academic achievement.
- Your child might know they think and learn well in some subject areas and their knowledge and skills are valued, often in non-academic areas. They may also know they find subjects like Maths and English difficult.
- Social and emotional challenges can also pose challenges. Sometimes children might not feel secure at school or they might find it hard to make friends.

b What are some ideas for what can be done at school to help my 2e child thrive?

Every child has the right to be happy and successful at school, regardless of their abilities and challenges. Provisions should be made so your child can experience success in as many areas of life as possible, not just the area in which they are gifted.

Some key considerations for helping 2e children thrive include:

- Helping your child see the unique value they bring to the world, and encouraging them to have confidence in themselves as a human being. Your child may be aware that they sometimes think differently from their classmates. It can be helpful for your child to know that difference can be a strength, and they have a unique contribution to make. Success is not just about high grades in every subject.
- Helping the school see the strengths your child has and identify your child based on these first, rather than on the challenges.
- Showing your child on a regular basis that you can see their giftedness in action and reminding them of this when they struggle in other areas. While these students can

show creative, unexpected outcomes in a range of areas, they often have difficulty showing what they know in acceptable ways. Reminding your child that they are gifted will help with some of the challenging times and enable them to thrive.

- Working out what your child needs to help them thrive, and finding a way of providing this. For example:
 - **Significant challenges with writing:** See what [assistive technologies](#) the school might be able to provide or recommend. For example, voice recognition software may be available to help students who have difficulty writing. Talk about access to occupational therapy services, either at school or through an external provider.
 - **Physical disability** that makes using stairs difficult: Talk to the school about how they might provide your child with easy access to as much of the school as possible, with ramps, lifts or ground level access points.
 - **Anxiety:** Have an open invitation at home to talk through how your child is feeling. Get external professionals on board to help with teaching calming and mindfulness techniques. Prioritise positive and supportive relationships with teachers and other key adults. Talk with your child's teacher about getting connected with the school wellbeing department or counsellor.
- Finding out what other professionals (such as occupational therapists, psychologists, paediatricians, counsellors and speech therapists) who work in the space are doing to guide and assess your child or other 2e children who may have similar strengths/challenges.

c How can I help both my child and the teachers/staff, so that my child can have success at school?

It takes a village to raise a child.

The saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' particularly in situations where a child's needs are complex and require a variety of areas of knowledge and expertise. It is important to work together positively and proactively with your child's school and teachers. This will help you build a good team or 'village' to support your child through their schooling journey. You can:

- Share your knowledge of your child and what makes them unique. Talk about their interests, passions, strengths and successes.
- Learn as much as possible about your child's unique needs. This might be from dealing with health care professionals, or from your own reading and research.
- Share as much as you can with the school: Information from doctors or other professionals will help school staff understand your child better. Often schools and

teachers need to know more about twice exceptional students than about students who do not have these unique needs and challenges. Teachers may rely on you to help understand your child's needs.

- Communicate with teachers regularly on your child's progress. You can set up a shared document (such as a Google doc), use email, write regularly in a journal, make phone calls, or hold conferences. Checking in regularly helps you be proactive, and provides opportunities to ask and answer questions.

d What could an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) look like for my 2e child?

An Individual Learning Plan is a powerful tool which provides structure and focus for your child's unique learning needs. It is a written plan which aims to implement specific strategies and goals to help your child to have confidence and success at school.

An ILP can be developed with a team: your child, you as the parent, your child's teachers, and other school staff who can help your child with their learning and development. It can focus on:

- Your child's **interests, strengths and successes**.
- Areas your child needs to have **help or intervention** in, framed as **goals**: this could be goals for learning in specific subject areas, social goals, emotional support strategies or behavioural targets.
- An indication of **entry-level skills, competencies or behaviours** related to each of the goals or areas of need.
- A **specific commitment or intervention** each person involved will make: this could be in the form of teacher interventions, specialist support interventions, family/home strategies and your own child's goals and commitments.
- **Reflection, evaluation and review** of interventions and progress on the agreed goals.
- **Follow up dates** to ensure the plan can be reviewed and reset ready for the next set of interventions and goals.

Related question: [What will a PSG/ILP do to help my child?](#)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

e What might be some of the reasons that my gifted 2e child is not succeeding at school?

There are a number of reasons a 2e child might be having difficulty achieving well and having confidence at school. A few possibilities are:

- 2e children are often difficult to identify. This is because both your child's giftedness and their challenges can **mask** and be masked. :
 - The focus is on the **disability** - and the giftedness is overlooked
 - The focus is on the **giftedness** - and the disability is overlooked
 - The giftedness and disability **cancel each other out**, therefore, the child appears to be an average learner
- 2e children have significantly [asynchronous developmental profiles](#). This means that it may be difficult to work out how to interact with a 2e child: if they are a 9 year old child who functions like a 21 year old in Mathematics, but like a 3 year old emotionally and socially, people might find it confusing and not know how to relate to the child. They may feel like they are talking to an adult during Maths lessons but then talking to a small child during play times in the yard.
- Your child may not have learnt the organisational strategies or have developed the required [executive functioning skills](#) (such as organisation, time management, self control and planning) to cope with learning at the level they are intellectually capable of. For example, your child might be a gifted trumpet player, but they may forget to bring their instrument to school on the days they have Music lessons. They may lose their sheet music and have trouble keeping their notes from their teacher in one place. They may often forget to turn up to their Music lesson during the day, and they may have trouble remembering what their teacher told them to work on during the week. Executive function can also impact starting a task, completing a task, achieving what the child sets out to do in a way that shows their potential and so much more (*Related resource: [Bright and Quirky](#)*).
- Not all gifted children are academically gifted or are able to show their giftedness in the way traditional classrooms and school systems expect to see giftedness. Your child might be a gifted creative thinker, but unable to write structured essays easily. They might have practical giftedness, such as hands-on engineering abilities, but might struggle to remember details and facts in tests.
- Your child may not yet have found 'their tribe'. It is important for all children to feel a strong and positive connection with at least one other person at school. 2e children can be particularly vulnerable to feeling disconnected or like they don't belong. If you suspect this might be an area of challenge for your child, reach out to parents of other students you hear your child talking about, or to teachers you often hear mentioned.

Work to build trusting relationships, as these can be very powerful in helping a child find a sense of belonging and success at school.

f My child is really intense – is this a sign of autism or ADHD, or is this normal for gifted children?

Gifted children can sometimes be misdiagnosed as having autism or ADHD. This is because there are similarities between some of the behaviours and characteristics of gifted children and of children with autism and ADHD:

- Your child might have the psychological trait called ‘openness’ or ‘[openness to experience](#)’. This means that they experience the world deeply and intensely, and can easily become overwhelmed or [overexcited](#). *Related question: [Is it normal for my child to sometimes get so intense or ‘overexcited’ that they have meltdowns?](#)*
- Many gifted children are passionate about one particular area and find it hard to focus on other things or to move on to other work when they are asked to. This intensity can be a good thing as many great discoveries and ideas stem from someone thinking intensely about an issue or idea. But this can also cause a lot of stress with intense emotional reactions to being asked to do other things other than what they are interested in.
- If a gifted child’s learning needs are not being appropriately met at school through the classroom environment and the curriculum, their behaviour can be intense and intensely challenging. Interventions that do not take a child’s giftedness into consideration can cause the behavioural problems to become worse.

If in doubt, seek a psychologist’s opinion. A paediatrician will do initial screening to investigate any autism spectrum or ADHD diagnoses, and pass on to appropriate professionals to continue the support as required. It is important that you consult with a psychologist who has experience with both **autism/ADHD** and **giftedness**, so that you and your child are provided with support and interventions that target the unique needs of gifted children.

See related question: [Is it normal for my child to sometimes get so intense or ‘overexcited’ that they have meltdowns?](#) for more detailed strategies.

Gifted Behaviors <i>Taken from NAGC & the Davidson Institute</i>	ADHD Behaviors <i>Taken from psychiatry.org</i>
Difficulty concentrating on tasks that are not intellectually challenging	Has problems staying focused on tasks or activities
Highly energetic—needs little sleep or down	Always ‘on the go’, as if driven by a motor

time	
Rapid comprehension	Blurts out an answer before a question has been finished
Impulsive, eager and spirited	Interrupts or intrudes on others
Non-stop talking/chattering	Talks too much
Issues with executive functioning	Has problems organizing tasks and work
Need for constant mental stimulation	Is easily distracted

g I know my child is gifted in at least one area, so why have they been put in the low ability or remedial class?

Sometimes a child's weaknesses or areas of struggle can dominate the perspective we as adults have of them. As human beings, we are wired to notice negatives before we notice positives. This is called a [deficit approach](#). Modern psychology is moving towards a [strengths approach](#) which sees a child's strengths first, and helps them identify their strengths in order to work on their areas of weakness.

[Masking](#) is common in 2e children: the disability can mask the giftedness; the giftedness can mask the disability; or they can cancel each other out. This can cause misdiagnosis or misinterpretation of a child's strengths, needs and abilities (*related question: [What might be some of the reasons that my gifted 2e child is not succeeding at school?](#)*). You can help by:

- Talking with your child's teacher:
 - Ask what the reason behind the class placement decision is. Listen carefully and with an open mind, as the teacher may see things you don't see in your child at home.
 - Ask if you can share your knowledge of your child. The school might not be seeing the same strength and ability that you see in your child.
- Working with the school to get support for your child in their area of struggle. You might pay for a tutor outside of school hours, or ask for some learning support in the classroom in one particular area. This will help your child 'fill the gaps' so that they can more easily show what they know and can do.
- Bringing evidence of your child's giftedness to show the teacher. This could be, for example:
 - Stories they have written

- Maths games they play or calculations they have done independently
- Photos of sculptures they have made
- Short films they have produced on the iPad
- Videos of them talking about an area of interest

Related questions can be found in Section 4: [How do I communicate with my child's school?](#)



Key Words

Assistive technology: technology that helps individuals living with disability to have higher levels of functioning and independence, for example computers for school students who struggle with handwriting, or voice-to-text software

Asynchronous development: two or more aspects of development that do not exist or happen at the same time

Deficit-based approach: the opposite of a strengths-based approach; an individual's difficulties, challenges and disabilities are prioritised and made the focus of identification, labeling and interventions.

Dyscalculia: a specific learning difficult that causes a wide range of challenges with understanding and applying mathematical concepts

Dysgraphia: a neurological (brain) condition that affects an individual's ability to put their ideas into writing

Dyslexia: a learning disability that causes difficulty in processing language and can affect an individual's ability in reading, writing and spelling

Dyspraxia: a neurological (brain) condition that develops in childhood causing difficulties with physical movement and coordination; this can impact on a child's ability to write neatly.

EAL: English as an Additional Language

Executive function: functions of the brain (mental skills) that control our behaviour: proficiency in adaptable thinking, planning, self-monitoring, self-control, working memory, time management, and organization

IEP/ILP/PLPs: Individual Education Plans, Individual Learning Plans or Personalised Learning Plans are documents which help teachers, parents, students and other professionals put strategies, goals and plans in place to ensure a child's learning needs are met.

Masking: in the context of 2e and gifted children, masking means various combinations of giftedness and disability concealing each other and therefore not allowing for appropriate interventions

Neurodiversity: Neurodiversity is a viewpoint that brain differences are normal, rather than deficits. Neurodiverse people experience, interact with, and interpret the world in unique ways. This concept can help reduce stigma around learning and thinking differences.

Openness to experience: a psychological trait or characteristic which is part of the Big Five Personality Theory of Five Factor Theory. People who are open to experience live with deep and complex emotional and mental experiences of the world.

Overexcitabilities: increased sensitivity, intensity and awareness in response to stimuli in a person's lived experience. Overexcitabilities form part of Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration.

Strengths-based approach: focusing on a person's strengths, rather than their deficits, and helping them use their strengths to address their deficits for optimal development

Twice exceptionality (2e): simultaneously having one or more areas of giftedness with one or more disabling conditions (physical, academic, social, emotional, psychological); also called dual/double exceptionality

Useful Links

2e children: <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/twice-exceptional-students>

Bright and Quirky: <https://brightandquirky.com/>

Difference between ADHD and gifted: <https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/before-referring-a-gifted-child-for-add-adhd-evaluation/>

Difference between ASD and gifted: <https://www.davidsongifted.org/gifted-blog/a-unique-challenge-sorting-out-the-differences-between-giftedness-and-aspergers-disorder/>

Further Reading

Vialle, W. & Rogers, B. (2009). *Educating the Gifted Learner*. Terrigal, NSW: David Barlow Publishing.

Winebrenner, S. (2002). Strategies for teaching twice exceptional students. *Understanding Our Gifted*, 14(2), pp. 3 - 6.

Winebrenner, S. (2000). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom (2nd ed.)*. Minneapolis: Free Spirit.



- Participate in enrichment activities and events that are of interest to your child and their like-minded friends.
- Increase your self-confidence as a parent.

Teacher networks and professional organisations are also very useful for parents of gifted children. There are many of these in Victoria and in other states. They can help with information about:

- How to set up a gifted program in your child's school.
- Providing professional development to help teachers to cater for gifted children.
- Finding resources for both school and home-based programs.
- Accessing reading materials about gifted and high ability education and the challenges and opportunities available to gifted students.
- Locating and organising enrichment programs for both school and home-based extension of gifted and high ability children.
- Providing seminars about all aspects of how to help gifted and high ability children, their families, and their teachers.
- Finding professionals that can help with identification and assessment of your gifted child.
- Putting you in touch with health professionals and psychologists who can provide you with the support you need.

Contact the VAGTC for help with any of the suggestions above.

b Where can I find other parents of gifted children?

There are many ways to meet other parents of gifted children, both face to face and through online networks and gifted associations. You can find groups or even start your own by:

- Googling 'gifted networks', 'gifted support networks', 'gifted resources', 'gifted programs' or 'gifted parent networks'. It is becoming the norm for many of these networks to meet online through platforms such as Zoom or using social media platforms such as Facebook or Twitter. This means that location is less of a concern for those who live in rural or remote areas, or who have difficulty with traveling to certain locations.
- Asking your local school about networks they are connected with in your area.

- Inquiring at local libraries and council information centres about what is on offer.
- Offering to organise opportunities for your children to meet and socialise with other children of similar abilities.
- Establishing a parent and gifted children's social network in your local area. Organisations such as the Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children (VAGTC) can help you to set up a network.
- Asking the principal at your child's school about the possibility of setting up a gifted parent support group in the school.
- Advertising and recruiting interested parents to your group via the school newsletter and social media platforms such as a Facebook page.
- Inviting parents and teachers of gifted and high ability children from your own school and other schools to join your network.

A local gifted network will provide opportunities for both children and parents to meet and socialise with people of similar interests outside the school by spending time together, going on outings together, organising coffee mornings and sporting activities, or meeting to share a special interest.

Useful Links

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

<https://www.aegt.net.au/>

ACT Gifted Families Support Group: <http://www.actgifted.net.au/actgt/f>

GERRIC Gifted and Talented Directory:

https://www.arts.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/documents/Gifted_and_Talented_Directory_2018.pdf

Gifted NSW: <https://giftednsw.org.au/>

Gifted Support Network Inc (Melbourne, Australia): <http://www.giftedsupport.org/resources>

Parents of Gifted Children - Australia Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/parentsofgiftedchildrenaust/>

Setting up a gifted parent support group: <https://www.giftedkids.ie/Guidelines.pdf>

Victorian Affiliated Network of Gifted Support Groups:

https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/etc/Past_Inquiries/EGTS_Inquiry/Submissions/100_VANGSG.pdf

VAGTC (Victorian Association for gifted and Talented Children): vagtc.org.au

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------