

What it means to have a gifted and talented child

Parent factsheet: Gifted and talented education

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

A child who is gifted may:

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

It is important to recognise that gifted students are found in all community groups. This is regardless of socio-economic, cultural or ethnic background. It is also important to recognise that gifted children may have a disability or a specific learning disorder that may prevent their giftedness being recognised and catered for. These students may be referred to as twice exceptional (2E), double labelled, or gifted with a learning disability (GLD).

A question parents often ask is, “I think my child is gifted but how can I be sure?” Parents and carers know their children better than anyone and they are often the best judge of their child’s ability and potential. Guidance can also be taken from observations made by extended family members, teachers, sporting and social group friends. Our ‘Identification parent factsheet’ provides some useful information on identifying gifted children.

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

Parents and carers should be guided by their child and their interests. This can include taking them to the library, museums, art galleries, movies etc, and making books, magazines, games, etc freely available. It can be helpful to learn about giftedness to become an advocate for your child. Support groups, such as the ACT Gifted Families Support Group, are a wonderful source of information and activities. They provide parents and children with the opportunity to mix with other parents going through the same issues and provide children with the opportunity to mix with a group of like-minded peers. The internet provides access to some excellent resources for both parents and children and opportunities to be part of online gifted networks.

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

Another question that is often asked is how giftedness is defined. In the research literature there are many definitions; the experts do not always agree on a single 'correct' definition. Currently in Australia the definition most used by education departments is Francoys Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent 2.0 (2008, 2016).

In simple terms, Gagné differentiates between giftedness (high ability) and talent (high achievement). The model states that around 10% of the population is *gifted* in either mental (intellectual, creative, social, perception) domains or physical (muscular and motor control) domains. The goal is to help each child to develop these gifts into various fields of talent through a developmental process. So, a child can be gifted and not talented, but not the other way around. In primary schools we speak mostly of gifted children (rather than gifted *and* talented) as the process of developing gifts into talents can take many years, and gifted students at primary school age may not yet have had the time and opportunity to develop talents.

Gifted children are a diverse group; in terms of the types of abilities they possess and the levels of giftedness. Different educational provisions are needed for students depending on their individual strengths, needs and interests.

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

Additional information for parents and carers is available on the [Gifted and talented student](#) page of the ACT Government website.

Frequently asked questions

What I should do if I think my child is gifted

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

You might also like to begin to collect information about your child that you may wish to discuss with your school's Gifted and Talented Liaison Officer (GaTLO) to ensure their needs are met. The school will also be able to provide you with information on supporting your child at school and at home.

Determining if your child is gifted

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

- High curiosity, explores how and why
- Intense interests
- Excellent memory
- Long attention span
- Excellent reasoning skills
- Quickly and easily sees relationships in ideas, objects, or facts
- Fluent and flexible thinking
- Elaborate and original thinking
- Excellent problem-solving skills
- Learns quickly and with less practice and repetition
- Unusual and/or vivid imagination
- Keen observation
- Rapid language development as a child
- Advanced interests
- Emotional intensity and sensitivity
- Heightened sense of justice
- Perfectionism
- Self-doubt
- Feeling of being different
- Understanding whole concepts before the details, rather than learning sequentially or through small unrelated steps.

The difference between a gifted child and a talented child

The Education Directorate, in the [Gifted and Talented Students Policy](#), has used Gagné's definitions for 'giftedness' and 'talent' (2008, 2016). These definitions are used by many education departments in Australia. Gagné's definitions for giftedness and talent are that:

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

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

The likelihood of more than one child in a family being gifted

Recent research indicates that in many cases siblings are within 10 IQ points of each other (Silverman, 1987). If one child is gifted, it is quite possible that the other children are gifted, too.

Nurturing your gifted child

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

What your school does to develop your gifted child

All ACT public schools are implementing the directorate's [Gifted and Talented Students Policy](#) which outlines the responsibilities of the principal and staff in meeting the needs of gifted students in their school. Factsheets, like this one, for parents provide some basic information about different aspects of giftedness and gifted and talented education and are available on the [gifted and talented students](#) web page. School staff are provided with the opportunity to undertake some professional learning in gifted education.

What a Gifted and Talented Liaison Officer does

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

Where to find out about my school's approach to gifted and talented learners

Every ACT public school has a Gifted and Talented Liaison Officer (GaTLO) who can provide information about the whole school approach for gifted and talented students at a school.

Applying for early entry for my child to start school before schooling age

Parents or carers considering early entry for their child should read more on the [early entry to preschool or school](#) page for ACT public schools. To be considered for early entry to preschool or kindergarten, a child must have an interpretable Full-Scale Intelligence Quotient (FSIQ) of 130 and above, as demonstrated by a cognitive assessment undertaken by a psychologist registered in Australia. Families with a Low-Income Health Card may apply for financial support for a cognitive assessment for their child.

When to get your child tested

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

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

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

Giftedness and behaviour links

Giftedness can be described as asynchronous (uneven) development (Morelock, 1991). For example, a child's cognitive skills may far exceed the physical skills needed for written work that demonstrates



their advanced thinking. Understanding adults are needed to provide support for the ensuing frustrations of the child. As with all children, social and emotional issues are part of parenting a gifted child. Gifted children often show a greater sensitivity and perceptiveness to the needs of others and to the environment generally.

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

Reliability of using 'intense interests' to identify giftedness

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

Boredom and behaviour problems in school

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

Children with disability can be gifted and talented

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

Who to contact to find out more about gifted and talented education

Under the Directorate's Gifted and Talented Students Policy, your child's school is required to nominate a Gifted and Talented Liaison Officer (GaTLO) as the first point of contact for all enquiries regarding gifted and talented education. The school's front office can provide you with the details of the school's GaTLO.

Resources

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

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

Websites

Australian

[Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented](#)

[ACT Gifted Families Support Group – Facebook group](#)

[Gifted Education Research Resource & Information Centre](#)

[Learning Difficulties Coalition NSW Inc](#)

[NSW Education Inspire program](#)

[Raising Children – the Australian Parenting website](#) (has multiple pages on gifted children)

International

[Council for Exceptional Children](#)

[European Council for High Ability](#)

[Dr. François Gagné](#)

[Gifted Development Centre](#)

[National Association for Gifted Children](#)

[National Centre for Learning Difficulties](#)

[Stephanie T Nolan, Is it a Cheetah](#)

[Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted](#)

[The 2e Resource](#)

[Uniquely Gifted](#)

[World Council for Gifted and Talented Children](#)

Books

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

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