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

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Introduction to the book

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

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

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

We welcome feedback from parents. Any suggestions for further questions and suitable resources can ensure that the publication remains current and relevant.
CHAPTER 1: The meaning of giftedness and talent

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

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

Intellectual giftedness has several important implications:

1. Gifted children are not all the same. Although there are some characteristics that the research suggests are indicators of giftedness, not all children will demonstrate all gifted behaviours, in all contexts, at all times. There are a range of different types and degrees of giftedness.
2. Giftedness is a developmental concept. Once a child is identified as being gifted, it is no guarantee of academic or life success. It is an indication only of a child’s potential for growth and achievement. It alerts parents and teachers to the imperative of finding provisions and services that meet their needs.
3. Gifted children have special educational needs. Their degree of difference from the norm requires qualitatively different provisions and services to match their ease and speed of learning, and their complexity of understanding. The wider the gap between the gifted child’s abilities and their age-based educational provisions, the more apparent their special educational needs become.
4. Giftedness is both a blessing and a challenge for children – they have the capacity for ease and speed of learning, but they will not always enjoy being different from their age peers, especially if their giftedness is not valued and they are made to feel different, or are bored and not challenged in their learning. For parents there is the joy of their gifted child’s capacity for creativity, insights and understandings that both enrich and astound, but there are certainly some
challenges in terms of keeping up with their learning and finding appropriate
environments where they can grow and be happy.
It is important to remember that giftedness is an ordinary difference, just as some
children are taller or shorter than their age peers, or have different interests and
personalities. Giftedness does not bestow any sense of superiority or enhanced value on
the child who is identified as gifted. All children are to be equally valued and
appreciated for their unique natures. Gifted children are children, just like any other
child, with children’s needs. Giftedness adds layers of complexities to their development
that require some different understandings and provisions in order to ensure that their
development is positive and their educational outcomes are fulfilling.

**Gagné’s Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent**

Gagné’s (2008) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Diagram 1) has been
adopted by most Australian States and is featured in the Australian Curriculum. It has
several elements that are attractive to educators and parents alike. Gagné makes a clear
distinction between giftedness and talent. Giftedness is the possession of natural
abilities or aptitudes at levels significantly beyond what might be expected for one’s age
in any domain of human ability (Gross, 2004). As demonstrated in Diagram 1, these
natural abilities include several domains, for example, Intellectual and Creative. Talent is
achievement or performance at a level significantly beyond what might be expected at a
given age and is usually the result of systematically developed skills (Gross, 2004).
Giftedness then, can be viewed as potential whereas talent can be viewed as
performance. It follows from this distinction that a child may be gifted and not talented
and this may explain under-achievement in gifted students. It also follows that if we find
a student with outstanding talent in one or more fields, that talent is being driven by a
gift in one or more domains of human endeavour.

Another attractive feature of Gagné’s model lies in the importance Gagné places upon
catalysts in the transformation of giftedness into talent. The Environmental catalyst
values the role of parents, teachers and significant others in the developmental process.
The Intrapersonal catalyst values the personal and mental qualities of gifted individuals
and their capacity to change, grow and develop their potentialities. The Chance catalyst
acknowledges the role that luck or chance can play in the development of talent. Gagné
estimates that 10-15% of students may be gifted, an estimation that is more inclusive
than most other definitions of giftedness. Within this range it should be recognised that
there are different levels of giftedness, ranging from mildly gifted to profoundly gifted.

Further reading: Module 1 of the Gifted and Talented Education Professional
Development Package for teachers: Core, Extension and Specialisation section.
Gifted behaviour can be displayed in one or more areas of human performance. It can be displayed in an academic area such as mathematics, science or language arts. For example, a five year old may be capable of working at a twelve year old level in mathematics or be reading material at a ten year old level. Gifted behaviour can also be displayed in a visual or performing arts area such as music, drama, art, craft or dance. For example, a high school student may show outstanding ability in playing the violin and take part in concert performances with an orchestra, or display a high degree of sophistication in wood carving or oil painting. Gifted behaviour can also be displayed in a socially valued area such as leadership or communication skills or in the areas of sport or mechanical skills.

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

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

Questions parents ask

How do I know if my child is gifted and talented?
Children with hidden or demonstrated gifts come from varying social and cultural backgrounds, have their own characteristics and personalities and come in all shapes and sizes.
Educators have described children's behaviour that can indicate outstanding ability, perseverance and creativity. Behaviour indicating giftedness in your child can include all or some the following, although this list is not exclusive:

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

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

- becoming bored easily
- avoiding monotonous, repetitive written tasks
- being naughty or irrepressible in class
- being the class clown
- being inattentive in class while absorbed in a private world
- being unwilling to undertake tasks seen as irrelevant
- having smart answers to questions
- refusing to conform.

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

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

**Do children display gifted behaviour all the time?**

No one is exceptionally outstanding all the time and it is quite normal, for example, for a child who is gifted in mathematics to make occasional mistakes in that area or to display average or even below average abilities in other areas such as reading, or in simple activities such as tying up shoe laces.
All children, including those who are gifted and talented, also need the opportunity to daydream, to experiment, to play with older and younger children and to mix with individuals of all ages, in other words, to be children.

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

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

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

- cultural and linguistic differences that can distort the test results
- inability to identify the child who responds with creative or divergent answers
- impersonal test conditions that do not take into account the emotional state of the child.

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

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

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

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

Finding out whether your child is gifted and talented should be a continuing process because your child's interests, needs and behaviour may change. Also, your child's growth and development may be uneven over time so continual monitoring and recording of behaviour is required to check needs and interests and to provide related experiences. This is of course true for all children.
Your child cannot demonstrate giftedness in a particular area without having experience in it. For example, your child needs to experience playing the guitar to show potential for outstanding performance in that field. This exposure is likely to occur at different times in a child's life so it is important to be continually aware of how your child is reacting to new as well as continuing activities. Hidden gifts and talents cannot be displayed unless a child has time to persevere with appropriate activities. You may be alarmed when your child wants to spend what you judge to be excessive time pursuing a particular interest. The development of giftedness and talent, however, can be frustrated by rigid rules about how your child is to use their time. There is a need for flexibility in the use of time to accommodate interests and encourage perseverance.

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

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

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

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

Further reading:


**Is creativity related to giftedness?**

Creativity refers to the ability to combine what already exists into something new: an idea or a product, such as a piece of music or poetry or a new procedure for carrying out a task, such as heating the home or designing a new car.

Your child may display creativity by offering many ideas on one topic, offering several solutions to a problem, coming up with unique or unusual ideas, creating fantasies, pretending, using imagination and taking risks.

Another way of assessing creativity is to observe your child's behaviour in everyday situations such as at play, or in tackling problems, as well as observing reactions to questions and learning tasks that can be approached in a variety of ways.

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

> Don't be afraid to fall in love with something and pursue it with intensity. Know, understand, take pride in, practise, develop, use, exploit and enjoy your greatest strengths. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others and to walk away from the games they impose on you. Free yourself to play your own game. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you. Don't waste energy trying to be well-rounded. Do what you love and can do well. Learn the skills of interdependence (p.10-11).
CHAPTER 2: Responding to the social and emotional needs of gifted children

Introduction

Most parents would agree that the social, emotional and physical development of children is as important as intellectual development. However, there is a risk of expecting more mature behaviour from the child who displays outstanding intellectual ability. They could be deeply interested, beyond their years in problems such as politics, religion, war and environmental pollution but could be socially, emotionally and physically still a child. For example, a five year old who demonstrates reasoning ability well beyond that age can burst into tears at the sight of a terrifying monster on television. Children need to know they have the support and confidence of their parents and that there are some problems or issues that can only be dealt with by adults. Your child's self-esteem is an important factor in being able to cope with the differences between intellectual development and other areas of growth. Development of self-esteem is not just a matter of intellect; it is built on valuing self, on being accepted as an individual and on being able to relate well with others.

Much social, emotional, physical and intellectual learning can take place through play. It can be a means of trying out new roles, relieving tensions, overcoming conflicts and providing for self-expression. Through play your child can explore, experiment and test ideas. Also, mixing with individuals of similar abilities and interests, in appropriate clubs, camps or out of school activities, can help with your child's social development.

Questions parents ask

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

We need to understand that all individuals are different, with different abilities, interests, needs, strengths and weaknesses. Children develop attitudes from the people around them: parents, teachers, other adults and children. In a family situation, encouraging individuality and discussing differences between individuals in positive ways helps gifted children to accept that giftedness is an ordinary difference. Differences between people can be highlighted by reading stories with your child, and viewing films that address difference. A list of motion pictures portraying gifted characters can be found on Hoagies website at http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/movies.htm.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**How do gifted children form friendships?**

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

- Stage 1 - Play Partner in the early childhood years
- Stage 2 - People to chat to, about age 7-9
- Stage 3 - Help and encouragement, about age 9-11
- Stage 4 - Intimacy/empathy, about age 11 or 12
- Stage 5 - The sure shelter: “A faithful friend is a sure shelter: whoever finds one has found a rare treasure” (Ecclesiasticus, 6:14).
Gifted children who have found their faithful friend earlier than others can be devastated when they are separated and their grief can follow the pattern of bereavement that requires sensitive understanding and possibly professional counselling.

Further reading:


*How do I encourage self-efficacy in my child?*

Henry Ford once observed: “Whether you think you can or you can’t, you are usually right.” An individual’s level of self-efficacy (confidence or self-belief) towards a given task will determine how likely they are to attempt something, how much effort they put into the task and how resilient they will be in the face of failure. Those gifted students who may be afraid that they will not live up to the expectations of others are likely to give up quickly when difficulties arise. As a result they are likely not to be identified as gifted if this becomes habituated behaviour (Chaffey, 2004b, p.7).

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

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

Further reading:


- Core Module pp 7-8, 18
- Extension Module, Academic Self-Efficacy, pp 10-20
- Specialisation Module 4, pp 29-34
**How do I manage a child with perfectionism?**

Schuler’s (2002) research found that:
- as a group, gifted students tend to be perfectionistic
- they are rather more perfectionistic than students of average ability
- their perfectionism can be a powerful force for high achievement.

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

Parents and children need to understand that gifted individuals are not expected to be faultless. Mistakes should be viewed as opportunities for learning.

One way parents can help children to understand this is to model learning from mistakes themselves. Many innovations in science and technology have come about as a result of mistakes that have been embraced. There are many examples of eminent people who made mistakes and overcame failure to achieve at a high level. Their experiences of how they overcame challenges can help a gifted child understand that failure and taking risks with their learning are necessary for intellectual growth.

Further reading:

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

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

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

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

Further reading:

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

**Is it reasonable to have high expectations of my gifted child?**
It makes sense that parents and teachers tend to set high academic expectations for gifted children and encourage them to achieve their best. Inadvertently, they may be putting unreasonable pressure on the gifted child who tries to meet adults’ expectations which may not necessarily match their own interests and needs. It is important that parents talk with their gifted children about setting appropriate learning goals and support them to achieve these. Goals need to be SMART – that is, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely in order to bring out the best in people (Neihart, 2008). Trying to live up to unrealistic high expectations can generate a fear of failing and a reluctance to take risks with their learning.
CHAPTER 3: The home and community

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

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

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

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

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

Questions parents ask

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

All human beings experience boredom and wise parents will help their children to see boredom as a positive rather than negative experience. Boredom can be an impetus to change and to seeking new learning experiences. Students can be encouraged to be
proactive rather than reactive in the face of boredom and to take a measure of responsibility for extending and enriching their own learning. This in turn enhances self-esteem and self-efficacy, especially in the teenage years.

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

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

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

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

Further reading: Habits of Mind website (Appendix E)

**What can be done at home to support effective learning at school?**
Your child will thrive in an environment where a wide range of interests and activities can be explored and enjoyed. These may include music, painting, writing, drawing, gardening, cooking, reading, science experiments, technology, computing, visiting zoos
and museums, sport, stamp collecting, craft work, learning a foreign language, animal husbandry, family games and discussions and inventing; the list is endless.

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

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

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

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

**Australian Guidelines for screen time:**

Australia’s Physical Activity Recommendations recommend that children 5-18 years accumulate no more than 2 hours of screen time a day for entertainment (excluding educational purposes).

Guidelines for children under five have also been released and recommend children younger than 2 years do not spend anytime viewing TV or other electronic media and for children 2-5 years less than 1 hour per day.

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


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

For social living to be harmonious, certain rules need to be observed. Society itself imposes certain rules and disciplines and these are known to all. Consider the problems of driving erratically in traffic. When these rules are broken, the resultant disciplinary action is also known. Therefore, if by discipline you mean such social rules, then most
families have them. Your child will feel more secure in a predictable environment where the rules are clearly understood. For example, if the smooth running of family life depends on meals being served at certain times then they need to observe this convention. If your child is to be accepted they need to learn what is socially acceptable in particular contexts. Disregard of minor social conventions which have little implication for others, such as wearing unconventional clothes or hair styles, or having an interest in unusual topics, ought not to be regarded by you as serious discipline problems. In your family life there needs to be a balance between rules to be observed and freedom to explore and experiment. Discussion between you and your child can be useful in recognising the social and personal consequences of some behaviour. It can also help to clarify expectations, feelings and needs. Your child needs to understand the range of behaviours available and their likely consequences. Just as basic academic skills need to be taught, so do social skills need to be taught and reinforced. As your child becomes older, negotiations between you and your teenager will need to take place about the rules to be observed for harmonious family life.

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

**What activities are available in the community?**

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

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

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

Gifted children may have wide-reaching interests and a love of learning in a variety of areas. Learning to prioritise is an important life skill for parents and their children. It is essential to find a balance between superficial coverage of many activities and deep learning in a few areas. Your child’s interests, age and energy levels in addition to family resources need to be considered when selecting extra-curricular pursuits.
What suggestions do you have when travelling with a gifted child?
As part of your planning for your trip, you would be wise to consult with the child’s school about how the child’s absence from school can be managed in a positive way. Travel can provide a wonderful opportunity for learning and acquiring different perspectives about the world beyond the classroom, if managed well. Before you go, your child may be involved in researching and contributing to the itinerary, and while you are away, they might be encouraged to use higher order thinking about similarities and differences between their home and places visited. There are a plethora of technological devices these days that will enable you child to keep a travel journal that describes their experiences and contains their reflections upon the trip. Given the accessibility that technology delivers, it should be possible for your child to continue vital studies whilst away and maintain contact with their teacher, where appropriate.

Further reading:
CHAPTER 4: The school environment

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

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

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

Further information: www.aitsl.edu.au

Parents are wise to seek information that will help them support their gifted child throughout their education. They have an important role to play as advocates for the rights of all children to receive an education commensurate with their needs and abilities. Informed parents make the best advocates for their children.

Questions parents ask

What systemic policies relate to educating gifted and talented students in South Australia?
There are three systemic policies on the education of gifted students that parents may access:

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

Understanding the systemic policy relevant to your child’s school will assist in establishing reasonable expectations of the school’s capacity to provide for your child’s educational needs. In addition to the systemic policy, individual schools may have their own policy for the education of gifted and talented students which should be accessible through the school’s website. Refer to Appendix F for links to policies.
Are there special learning needs for gifted and talented children?

*The Australian Senate inquiry into the Education of Gifted Children* (Collins, 2001) emphasised that gifted children have special educational needs, and that if these needs were not met, they are likely to underachieve and even drop out of school. Understanding that gifted children have special needs requires educators to make adjustments to their learning tasks in order to meet these needs as an issue of social justice. All children have the right to an education that meets their needs.

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

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

What is the Australian Curriculum?

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

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

The Australian Curriculum has a 3 dimensional design: Learning Areas, the General Capabilities and the Cross-Curriculum Priorities as shown in Diagram 2.
Diagram 2: The Australian Curriculum v7.2

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

The Cross-Curriculum Priorities are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and culture, Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia and Sustainability. These are to be embedded in all learning areas because they will assist students to have a deeper understanding of the globalized world in which they live.

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

On its Home Page, the Australian Curriculum has a section entitled Student Diversity and this encompasses Students with a Disability, Gifted and Talented Students and Students with EAL/D. The opening sentence of the Gifted and Talented section is unequivocal. Gifted and talented students are entitled to rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities drawn from the Australian Curriculum and aligned with their individual learning needs, strengths, interests and goals (Australian Curriculum v7.2).

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

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

In the Student Diversity section, there is also a section entitled Illustrations of Personalised Learning. This acknowledges that students have unique learning needs and that curriculum can be adjusted to match those needs. There are examples in this section that illustrate how a Learning Area can be combined with a General Capability and/or a Cross-Curriculum Priority to personalise learning for gifted students. One
example is a gifted student studying Year 8 Science whose interest in energy was combined with the Cross-Curriculum Priority of Sustainability to provide a challenging learning experience. There are also other opportunities within the Learning Areas for teachers of gifted students to provide enrichment and acceleration in both content and skills. Further information can be located at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au

**What provisions are appropriate or possible for gifted students?**

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

**Individual classroom**

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

**School organisation**

- policy for the education of gifted students that is linked to other school policies and the school’s mission statement
- specialist gifted education coordinator to work with students and staff
- experts in residence, where schools use the expertise of an individual on a regular basis within the school setting to develop and extend a particular area of interest
- acceleration, either by subject or year level (Appendix D)
- special interest schools
- part time withdrawal from regular classrooms for participation in gifted program
- selective classes for gifted students
multi-age classes where students of differing age groups work together within the one class
- cluster grouping of gifted students within a year level
- individual timetabling which enables students to work at different year levels and at different ability levels
- special classes
- clubs
- competitions, either national or local.

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

**Under what circumstances should I seek early entry for my child?**
Gifted children are entitled to start pre-school and school earlier than usual if this is determined to be an appropriate provision. The policy guiding this can be found in the Early Years Fact sheet 2 (2014), available at [http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Early_entry_preschool_FA_1.pdf](http://www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Early_entry_preschool_FA_1.pdf)

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

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

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

What is acceleration and is it suitable for my child?

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

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

Acceleration can take several forms:

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

The Australian Curriculum advice on Student Diversity specifies that parents must be consulted if the school is proposing to accelerate their child or make a substantial adjustment to their learning program. There is no set answer as to whether your child should or should not be accelerated in one way or another. Both you and the school...
need to work together when considering this issue, taking into account your child’s feelings and readiness, your attitudes, as well as those of the school and your child’s social, emotional and physical development. Your child may well be already socialising with people of similar ability who are at a different age level.

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

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

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


Further reading:

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

Parents meeting with the school librarian and forming a relationship with them is valuable, as the child may feel secure with the sympathetic librarian who has wide knowledge of suitable material for all ages and abilities. Your child can choose books from the library based on personal interests and can share stories with the rest of the class or the family through activities such as model making, puppetry, painting, carrying...
out a science experiment, devising a television commercial to promote a particular story or using musical instruments to introduce characters. The nature of these activities will depend on your child's strengths and interests. Activities and questions related to personal reading need to be open ended so that the child is able to respond in a variety of ways to show their understanding. Some ways could include making models, dressing up as a book character, painting, drawing, and making character puppets.

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

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

My child says they bored and that they have been "turned off" learning at school. How can I get the school to cater better for them?
Initially there are two steps that can be helpful. The first is to discuss with your child what they see as wrong; what are the reasons for them being bored and disengaged and what do they want to do about it. This is because the responsibility for avoiding boredom lies not only with you and school staff, but also with your child.

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

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

Why do some gifted children underachieve and what can be done at school and at home?
Children are described as underachievers when standardised test scores show capabilities that are not reflected in school performance. Or it may be that both parents and teachers, through observation, think that a child is not working to their full capacity. There are many possible causes for this and initially it is wise to check the child's health
and physical condition. However, the cause is usually a combination of factors relating to the school, the home and the child.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**How can I help the school?**

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

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

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

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

Another way to assist the school is for you to become a member of the Parents’ Club or the school’s Governing Council where you can discuss with other parents and staff the needs of all children, including those who are gifted and talented.
What are some specific needs of gifted and talented girls at school?
The peer group to which girls belong, especially at high school level, may not value high academic performance, ambition and career orientation and so the girls may underachieve. In some cases girls deliberately underachieve because they want to be socially accepted by their class mates and do not want to appear to have more ability than boys with whom they may wish to develop friendships. The attitudes of school and teachers are important here and can play an important part in fostering individuality as well as excellence in all students, in academic and non-academic areas.

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

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

Further reading:

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

Parents should be aware that gifted boys have some gender based characteristics which are inherently different from gifted girls. In general, they will tend to:
- be more analytical
- be more focused on one idea at a time
- be less able to think about several ideas simultaneously
- be more developed in technology skills
- prefer to work alone rather than in teams
- prefer to analyse emotions rather than express them.

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

Further reading:

**How can I help my child who is being bullied and harassed?**
Some gifted children, may occasionally be subjected to bullying at school because some of their characteristics such as sensitivity, intensity or a passion for justice, may be seen by peers as being different. If you consider that your child is being bullied at school, speak to the class teacher or principal to alert them and request that they put into effect some strategies from the school’s bullying/harassment policy to assist your child. If your child needs more intensive help, it may be necessary to consult a registered psychologist.
Further reading:
The following websites are highly recommended and contain a wealth of resources for parents, teachers and students.
http://www.safeschoolshub.edu.au/
APPENDIX A: Parent checklist

Checklists are one way of identifying gifted children, and may provide some useful confirmation of parents’ intuitive understanding of their children. Checklists may also provide important data for the school and may form the basis of a conversation with your child’s teacher. There are many parent checklists available which focus on documented characteristics and behaviours of gifted children. We include a sample item from a checklist to be found at the following address https://education.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/EDUCFile/Module2_PRIMARY.pdf

Things My Young Child Has Done

Checklist item:

My child:

1. Has quick accurate recall of information.

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

SA 1 0 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 SD
☐ Unsure or don’t know

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

My child: Antonio Tamaro

SA 1 0 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 SD
☐ Unsure or don’t know

A personal example:

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

It is clear that Antonio has an excellent memory, both verbally and spatially. The completion of the rest of the checklist will give an overall picture of Antonio’s ability and highlight his needs.
APPENDIX B: Which pre-school or school?

All children need, and have a right to an educational environment that:
- respects diversity and nurtures a sense of belonging
- fosters learner well-being
- promotes and acknowledges an ethos of excellence across the creative, intellectual, physical, social and emotional areas.

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

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

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

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

Further reading:
APPENDIX C: International guidelines on acceleration

International Guidelines on Suitability for Accelerated Progression

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

1. It is not necessary for every gifted student to be psychometrically tested. However, in the case of students who are being considered for accelerated progression, there should be a comprehensive psychological assessment of their intellectual functioning, academic skill levels and social-emotional adjustment by a trained psychologist.

2. Academically, the student should demonstrate skill levels above the average of the class they desire to enter.

3. Socially and emotionally, the student should be free of any serious adjustment problems. Principals should be aware, however, that in some gifted students social or emotional difficulties may have been caused by inappropriately low grade placement. In such cases the situation may be alleviated by accelerated progression.

4. The student should be in good physical health. The student's size, however, should be considered only to the extent that competitive sport may be viewed as important in later years.

5. It is important that the student should not feel unduly pressured by parents. The student themselves should be eager to move ahead.

6. The receiving teacher must have positive attitudes towards the grade advancement and must be willing to help the student adjust to the new situation.

7. Judgements about the student's social and emotional maturity should include input from the student's parents and the psychologist. Gifted students are sometimes rejected by their classmates. It is important that teachers do not confuse the absence of close peer relationships with social immaturity.

8. Ideally, grade advancement should occur at natural transition points, such as the beginning of the school year. However, mid-year advancement may sometimes be desirable where the student’s prior teacher and receiving teacher may more easily confer about how best to help the student make a smooth transition.

9. All cases of accelerated progression should be arranged on a trial basis of at least six weeks. The student should be aware that if the trial period is not a success, they will return to the original grade placement. It is important that in such a circumstance the student should not be made to feel that they have failed.
10. Care should be exercised not to build up excessive expectations from grade advancement. A small minority of gifted students are so far advanced in their intellectual or academic development that one year of accelerated progression may still leave them bored at school. For such students further advancement may be advisable at a later period in their schooling.

11. Decisions regarding accelerated progression should be based on facts rather than myths. The research literature reveals that accelerated progression benefits the gifted student both academically and socially. Conversely, failure to advance a highly gifted student may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation and maladjustment.

More guidelines on Acceleration:

1. There should be a comprehensive evaluation of the child.

2. Intellectually the child should have an IQ of 130 or higher or should have a level of mental development that is at least one standard deviation from the mean.

3. Academically the child should demonstrate skill levels of at least one year above the class into which they would be advanced.

4. If the child is high in several academic areas but low in only one or two they may be advanced as long as there is help available in the weaker subjects.

5. If the child is advanced in only one or two academic areas they should remain in the present class but be allowed to work with a higher class for the subject in which they excel.

6. In most cases the child should be socially and emotionally free of any serious adjustment problems and have demonstrated persistence and motivation, however in some cases adjustment problems may have been caused by inappropriate grade placement and acceleration will alleviate the problem.

7. Physically the child should be in good health. Physical size should only be considered to the extent that competitive sports may be important in later years. Even that problem is unimportant if teams are chosen on age rather than grade level.

8. The child should not feel pressured to advance.

9. The teacher who will have the child in the advanced class should be positive about the acceleration and be prepared to help the child adjust to the new class.

10. Mid-year and end of year acceleration are both acceptable. Mid-year has the advantage of both teachers still working in the school so both can support the child. End of year has the advantage of all the children changing class. Placing the child in a vertically grouped class has advantages in that the child can join the
class at the lower level, complete two years in one and then advance to the next class with an established social group.

11. Acceleration can be done on a trial basis. The child could attend the higher grade part time to establish whether it will work, or there could be a time limit within which the child is free to return if the acceleration is proving unsuccessful.

12. Caution is needed not to build excessive expectations from acceleration. The child should not be made to feel a failure if it does not go well.

13. Some children are so advanced that single grade acceleration is insufficient. This would happen if the child is 3 or more standard deviations above the mean or 4 or more years above the current year level. Depending on the child, it is useful to do such acceleration in several small steps over a period of time.

14. Teachers should be aware that failure to accelerate a gifted child may result in poor study habits, apathy, lack of motivation and maladjustment.

APPENDIX D: Annotated bibliography - Books

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Australian Association for the Education of Gifted and Talented (AAEGT)**
http://www.aaeft.net.au/
The national association conducts a bi-annual conference in different capital cities, publishes the *Australasian Journal for Giftedness and Talent*, and provides information and useful links to other resources.

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

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

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

**Clearing Skies**
www.clearingskies.com.au
This website provides a range of professional services to nurture talent development and wellbeing within the gifted population.

**Davidson Institute for Talent Development**
http://www.davidsongifted.org/
The Davidson Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting profoundly gifted students, 18 years and under. Its mission is “.....to recognise, nurture and support profoundly intelligent young people and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents to make a positive difference.” There are many useful free resources available.

**Department of Education and Early Childhood Development**
Victoria has launched a new Gifted and Talented Strategy in 2014
Gifted and Talented
This site is maintained by the Victorian Department of Education and provides detailed information about the education of gifted and talented students in Victoria.

**European Council for High Ability**  
[www.echa.info](http://www.echa.info)  
ECHA provides courses in gifted education, reports on research and provides forums on different topics for teachers and parents. The refereed Journal of High Ability Studies is published twice a year. A conference is held every two years, alternating with the World Council on Gifted and Talented Children’s conference.

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

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

**GERRIC (2004)**  
In response to the findings of the 2001 Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee Report, the Australian Government commissioned the Gifted Education Research, Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC) at the University of New South Wales to develop the Gifted Education Professional Development Package. CDs of the Package were delivered to every school in Australia 2005-2006 and are now available as an online resource. The Package consists of six modules that focus on particular areas of Gifted Education:

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

Each of the six modules contain Core, Extension and Specialisation sections which in turn contain practical components, for example, case studies. All levels of schooling are covered in a variety of educational settings: Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary.
Although the Package is designed for teachers who wish to undertake professional development in Gifted Education, parents will find the Package informative and accessible. Plain language is used and the modules are illustrated with apt cartoons. Coloured icons throughout the modules allow quick identification of research, case studies, information and activities according to individual needs.

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

**Gifted and Talented Children’s Association of South Australia (GTCASA)**  
www.gtcasa.asn.au

**Gifted Learning Disabled Australia**  
GLD Australia is a national online learning community responding to the needs of gifted children and gifted adults with specific learning disabilities and other learning challenges, and the needs of those who care for, teach and advocate for them, through the sharing of information, research and personal experiences. GLD Australia is an independent community with a member-owned and member-operated closed Yahoo Group list. It is affiliated with the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented (AAEGT): [http://www.aaegt.net.au](http://www.aaegt.net.au), which is the Australian national umbrella association for State gifted associations.

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

**Habits of Mind**  
http://www.habitofmind.org/  
This website provides resources to support understanding of Art Costa’s Habits of Mind. The site also provides information about the Habit of Mind resources available to educators and parents seeking assistance implementing Habits of Minds in classrooms and families. There is a whole section devoted to inspirational quotations that match each Habit of Mind. Another related website is [http://www.mindfulbydesign.com/about-habits-mind](http://www.mindfulbydesign.com/about-habits-mind)

**Hoagie’s Gifted Education Page**  
http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/readings.htm  
Information on this excellent site comes from the Davidson Institute for Talent Development. There are links to the many issues parents of gifted children continually
have to deal with, to journals of gifted education, and to research on gifted students. All of the links have a short annotation. Motion pictures portraying gifted characters are listed alphabetically and annotated at [http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/movies.htm](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/movies.htm).

**Mindsets**

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

**Neag Centre for Gifted Education and Talent Development**
[http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/)

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

**Self-Efficacy**

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

Another useful website is Professor Bandura’s website:
[http://stanford.edu/dept/psychology/bandura/](http://stanford.edu/dept/psychology/bandura/)

**SENG (Supporting the Emotional Needs of Gifted Children)**

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

**Superkids**

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

**Tournament of Minds**
[http://www.tom.edu.au/](http://www.tom.edu.au/)

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

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

**World Council for Gifted and Talented Children** [http://www.world-gifted.org/](http://www.world-gifted.org/)
The WCGTC is an international organisation for the gifted and talented. As such, it hosts a world conference every two years in different countries. It also publishes a refereed journal several times a year.
APPENDIX F: Useful contacts

Gifted and Talented Children’s Association of South Australia
Website: http://gtcas.a.asn.au/

Department of Education and Child Development (DECD)
31 Flinders Street,
Adelaide.
South Australia. 5000
Ph: (08) 8226 1000
Website: www.decd.sa.gov.au

Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA)
277 Unley Road,
Malvern.
South Australia. 5061.
Ph. (08) 8179 1400
Website: www.ais.sa.edu.au
Contact Janet Farrall
farrallj@ais.sa.edu.au

Catholic Education South Australia (CESA)
116 George Street,
Thebarton.
South Australia. 5031.
Ph. (08) 8301 6600
Website: http://www.cesa.catholic.edu.au/
Policy for gifted students and guidelines for implementation available at
http://online.cesanet.adl.catholic.edu.au/docushare/dsweb/View/Collection-360

Lutheran Schools’ Association (LSA)
137 Archer Street,
North Adelaide, SA 5006
Ph. (08) 8267 5565
Policy for gifted students available at

University courses in Gifted Education
Flinders University School of Education
Contact Lesley Henderson,
Ph. (08) 8201 3331
Email Lesley.henderson@flinders.edu.au
REFERENCES


