



December, 2025

# Final Report

Design and delivery of professional learning to support learning outcomes for high ability students

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# Introduction

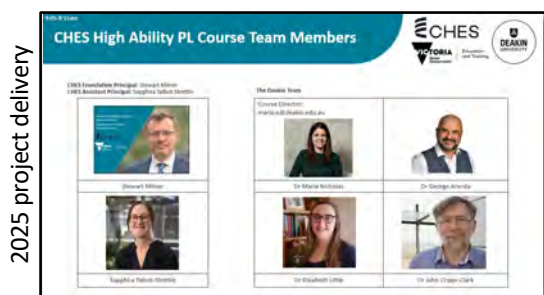
In January 2025, the Department of Education and Training (DET)'s Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES) partnered with Deakin University to design and deliver professional learning courses that would provide the following learning outcomes for teachers:

- confident identification of high-ability students
- knowledge and skills for the provision of differentiation and teaching strategies that support high-ability students in the classroom
- knowledge and skills to support twice-exceptional students
- understanding of the range of challenges and needs of high ability students and can support them to engage in learning
- knowledge of resources and programs available to support high ability students and an action plan for applying effective practices in their classrooms.

‘The workshop and presentation day was really insightful and engaging. I have definitely gained a deeper understanding about HA learners, differentiation and ways in which I can better meet the needs of my students. Thank you very much for the support, encouragement and wonderful resources and sessions’  
- Secondary course attendee

This work was built on the outcomes of past PL, where Deakin University co-designed and delivered the suite of courses for primary teachers, secondary teachers and school leaders via hyflex delivery at CHES in 2022-2024. The findings from participants’ survey responses show that overall satisfaction with the 2025 program was at **90.66%** (+3.95 from 2024), demonstrating that this goal was achieved. This report draws on participant data (provided in full in the appendices) to detail the outcomes of this project.

## Professional Learning Courses via Hyflex Delivery



Including Project Officer: Cathy Belleville

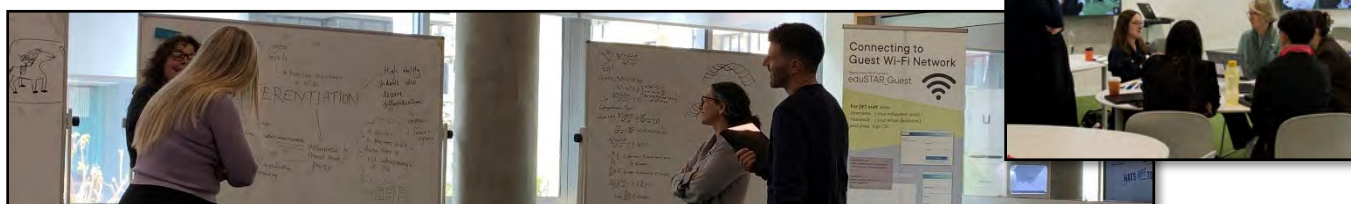
Following a design summit in April 2022 with key stakeholders, and a pilot of the courses in Term 4, 2022, the Deakin University team delivered 24 Professional Learning Courses on *teaching and learning with high ability students* for **Primary School** teachers, **Secondary School** teachers and **School Leaders** in 2023-2024 (N=389 attendees). With further refinements in **2025**, eight PL courses were delivered for 97 primary school teachers and 114 secondary school teachers in terms 1, 2, 3, and 4 in 2025 (N=211).

The course was designed to provide participants with a workshop that explored: (1) **WHO** high ability students are; (2) **WHAT** to teach when differentiating the curriculum for high ability students, and; (3) **HOW** to differentiate one’s pedagogy for high ability students.

Resources that were used in the workshops included the following (a full breakdown of the course is provided in the appendices):

- the Victorian Department of Education’s **High Ability Toolkit/ revised policy/guidance website**
- **Videos/audio of teachers/students** discussing topics related to the **who, what, and how** of high ability education.
- Descriptive student profiles using the high ability profiles provided on the FUSE website, and on the revised DoE website.
- a **scoping review on differentiation** created by Deakin researchers Nicholas, Skourdombis and Bradbury, publicly available (Open Access) via the journal *Gifted Child Quarterly*: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00169862231222225>.
- The revised and newly released **Victorian Teaching and Learning Model V.2.0**.
- The NSW Government’s **Differentiation Adjustment Tool**.
- **Case studies** from our past 2022-2024 CHES PL participants who conducted and shared their action research projects.
- Ongoing access to a **resource bank** (including resources from past PLs) for all participants.

The full-day workshops were **provided via hyflex delivery** with some participants on site at CHES, and some attending virtually. Deakin facilitators were present both at CHES and online to facilitate delivery.




Over 2022-2023, and with revisions in 2024 and again in 2025, an online site was created for the delivery of this professional learning course, designed to enable hybrid delivery of the full day workshop and ongoing access to the action research projects/resources shared and created as part of the course in 2022-2025.



The online site was created to support participant engagement before, during and after the conclusion of the workshops.

Welcome to the High Ability Teaching and Learning site



**Current 2025 Participants**

[Click here](#)

**2023-2024 Participants**

[Click here](#)

**Information about the 2025 program**

This program is run through the Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES) and is delivered by Deakin University. It runs four times a year: in Terms 1, 2, 3, and 4, and is in its third year of delivery – with significant revisions to the program provided in 2025 in response to past participants' feedback. Thank you for your registration. We look forward to meeting you and leading you through the 1 day program.

**Prior to the workshop,** we ask that you familiarise yourself with this site. **On the day of the workshop** we ask that you bring: (1) a case study student or group of students who are of high ability (you may have some of their assessment outcomes or other anecdotal notes you've been taking) – we will ask that you speak about this case study in de-identified form on the day; (2) a lesson or unit of work you have used/plan to use with that student/group of high ability students.


For those attending the workshop in person, there are numerous public transport access options. We are located at 669 Chapel Street in South Yarra. There is no on-site parking at CHES, unfortunately, but there is plenty of parking directly across from CHES in the car park beneath Woolworths (including early bird parking). For those participating online, the Zoom link to the program is provided on your workshop page via the link provided below.

Please bring headphones whether you are attending in person or via Zoom. People attending in person need to bring their own laptops.


**2025 Program**

**Let's begin**

Please select from the programs below. For those attending online, the Zoom link will be provided once you make your selection.



**Primary Teachers**  
Workshop



**Secondary Teachers**  
Workshop

**Contact Us**

If you have any issues accessing the site, please email Ms Cathy Belleville at: [c.belleville@deakin.edu.au](mailto:c.belleville@deakin.edu.au)

Warm regards,  
Dr Maria Nicholas  
Course Director  
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Sapphira Talbot-Strettie  
Assistant Principal  
Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES)  
Email our business manager at: [ches@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:ches@education.vic.gov.au)


The site included:

- information about the upcoming workshop (such as the date/time, CHES address and Zoom link);
- what to bring to the workshop;
- IT troubleshooting/contact details;
- A handout of the PowerPoint including timings for each activity (with interactive links);
- Downloadable resources mentioned or used in the workshop;
- Hyperlinks to resources mentioned or used in the workshop; and
- A resource bank.

**Pedagogies: How**

Below are the resources we will engage with/engage with during the hour part of the workshop.

**Video Resources**



How: Teaching strategies you like and don't like

[Download a written copy of this video](#)

**Websites and documents**

VLM 2.0 Enacting a Multi-tiered system of supports.pdf

[Have a look!](#)

Assessing the Nicholas et al. (2024) paper on differentiation

[Have a look!](#)

Assessing the differentiation adjustment tool

[Have a look!](#)

[Download the Case Studies discussed today](#)

[The Dea's advice and resources for supporting LIL learners](#)

[Download the Student Profile document](#)

**Time to reflect...**

What does this mean to me/what will I/we do in the classroom or back at my school?

[Return to the reflection documents you downloaded earlier](#)

**Resource Bank**

Access a bank of readings/resources

Access past action research projects

Search for/connect with each other

[Go to the resource bank](#)

[Go to action research projects](#)

[Connect](#)

## Website redesign in 2025

The accompanying online *High Ability Teaching and Learning PL* site has been undergoing redesign and refinement since it was first designed in 2022. In **2023** participant satisfaction with the [redacted] website used for the PL at CHES was at an overall satisfaction level of **67.43%**. In **2024**, the team redesigned the site on a Deakin-hosted platform (via Wordpress) based upon past participants' feedback. Overall satisfaction in 2024 was **79.34%**. With an eye towards maintaining a high satisfaction rate, the team redesigned the Deakin-hosted site in January 2025 [site address redacted]. The aim was to further remove duplication and clutter, and to make movement through the site more intuitive, smooth and linear. In **2025**, overall satisfaction with the site was **95.3%** (+27.9% since 2023).

## Methodology

The design of the suite of courses was informed by several stages of data collection that occurred over several cycles of development, beginning with a design summit, co-design of the courses with the CHES team/DoE, a pilot of the courses in 2022 and revisions/further refinements at the end of each course delivery over 2023-2025 using anonymous feedback from attendees (supplied via an online Qualtrics survey) which was reviewed with our partners at CHES at quarterly intervals.

### The Design Summit, Pilots and Iterative Redesign

In April 2022, the Deakin team designed and conducted a design summit in partnership with DoE representatives, modelled after the 'design sprint' but crafted to run over a one-day workshop for each cohort of attendees. The outcome of the design summit with key stakeholders, including primary school teachers, secondary school teachers and school leaders, was to identify the following 'problem' in high ability (HA) education:

- Schools and school communities don't feel equipped to recognise, plan for and support HA students to learn (within the classroom and beyond)\*

*\*with acknowledgement that students, parents, teachers, school leaders, etc. are part of this system*

It was clear that all teachers/school communities/school leaders are motivated to support HA students to reach their full potential but weren't as equipped or supported as they'd like to be able to achieve that aim.

One of the greatest challenges identified by participants was teachers' capacity/ability to use assessments **to identify HA children** (e.g., what does a descriptive profile 'look like?') and **how to differentiate**/challenge/extend HA children in the classroom. An interesting contradiction arose when viewing the poll's high score (from summit attendees) for "teacher confidence in differentiation," with the group wondering whether teacher confidence in differentiation may be higher than their capacity, due (to a degree) to the paradox that "they don't know what they don't know."

The group identified a need for:

- **A shared understanding**/language for speaking about/identifying HA children – system wide as well as school wide (e.g., using the DoE's High Ability toolkit/website materials)
- **A deeper understanding of what differentiation is/looks like**, including an understanding of how to efficiently plan for whole-class differentiation that explicitly accounts for all learners, including HA students.

In identifying the overarching problem listed above, a query was raised: whether **assumptions** may be undermining HA children's progress. For example, the following was shared based on one participant's past experiences:

- Teachers in schools with High Achievers programs/SEAL programs may assume that the children are catered for in those programs and so they don't have to be catered for in the classroom;
- Teachers in schools that don't have designated programs may make assumptions that teachers are effectively differentiating in the classroom (when this may not be the case).

Using the above feedback the suite of courses was designed, with portions trialed in August 2022 with two cohorts: teacher/leaders from **the primary context** and teachers/leaders from **the secondary context**, entirely online (via Zoom) over a half-day period each. Feedback from this trial informed further revisions ready for the November/December full

'They don't know what they don't know about differentiation.'

course pilot in Term 4 of 2022.

Iterative course redesign occurred in response to thematic analyses of attendee feedback at the conclusion of each suite of course offerings (i.e., at the end of each school term 2023-2025). For example, the descriptive profiling activity that was scheduled to occur directly following the 360-degree video/classroom observation was shifted to occur directly following the high-ability definition activity in the 2023-2024 offering because it was deemed that the move would help improve the flow of activities – the shift from one concept/focus to the next. In 2025, a major revision was to divide the workshop into three key components:



- **WHO** are our high ability students? (examining Gagne’s four domains of giftedness/talent – the intellectual, social, creative and physical; the idea of masking/twice-exceptional students; creating descriptive profiles of students that captures HA students’ diverse needs and potential)
- **WHAT** to teach high ability students (cognitive stretch), centered around an unpacking of the 2025 Teaching and Learning Model V.2.0 – (*elements of learning*)
- **HOW** to teach high ability students, centered around an unpacking of the 2025 Teaching and Learning Model V.2.0 – (*elements of teaching*)

**NB:** Videos/audio of student voice featured throughout the workshops in 2025, as did case studies from past PL attendees’ action research project presentations (see Appendices 1 & 2 to access the course outline and case studies documents in full).

**Deakin University Team 2022-2024:** Maria Nicholas, Andrew Skourdombis, Shaun Bangay, Linda Hobbs, Sophie Mckenzie, Guy Wood-Bradley, Seamus Delaney, John Cripps Clark, George Aranda, Ondine Bradbury.

**Deakin University Team 2025:** Maria Nicholas, George Aranda, John Cripps Clark, Elizabeth Little, Cathy Belleville.

## Profile of Attendees

Over 2023-2025, the course has had **600 participants** from DoE primary schools and secondary schools across the state of Victoria. The breakdown shows that there were more attendees in 2023 (n=221) than in 2024 (n=168). Attendance increased again in 2025 (n=211). This was a positive shift given that course offerings decreased from twelve offerings a year in 2023-2024, to eight offerings in 2025.

The reason for the decreased offerings in 2025 was informed by participant attendance data. From 2023-2024, the majority of participants attended the school leaders course (n=148). The school leaders cohort included school principals, assistant principals, department leaders and/or high ability practice leaders (HAPLs). However, some school leaders elected to attend the primary or secondary course (in addition to or rather than attending the leaders’ course), often attending with other staff from their school. Participant feedback showed that there was a preference for group attendance where possible, therefore the offerings were reduced to a primary and secondary course offering per term in 2025. Survey data showed that attendance (in 2025) was comprised of a mixture of classroom teachers, team/school leaders, assistant principals, principals, HAPLs and learning specialist.

The Deakin team also facilitated last-minute shifts from in-person to on-line attendance for participants who would not have been able to attend otherwise. The 2025 breakdown is provided in Table 1, showing greater attendance among secondary school staff (n=114). For the 2023-2024 breakdown, see the 2024 End of Year Report.

**Table 1 2025 Course attendance**

Course		Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Primary Course (n=97)	Total	14	28	23	32
	online	5	24	18	26
	in-person	9	4	5	6
Secondary Course (n=114)	Total	31	28	28	27
	online	19	14	20	21
	in-person	12	14	8	6
<b>Total (N=211)</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>59</b>

Attendees in **2023-2024** (whether in-person or via Zoom) came from schools that are located across the state of Victoria, with most (n=330; 85%) located within 100km of Melbourne’s CBD.



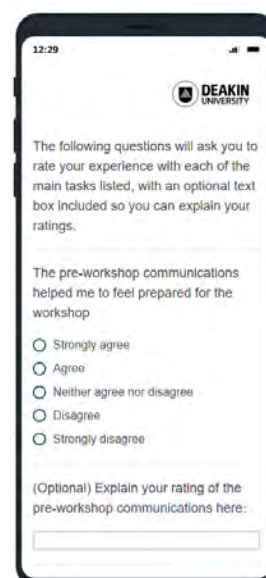
Attendees in **2025** (whether in-person or via Zoom) continued to represent schools that are located across the state of Victoria, with most (n=185; 86%) located within 100km of Melbourne’s CBD. See Appendix 3 for a tabulated breakdown of this data.



### Measurements used to evaluate the courses

Two measures were used to gain insight into the participants’ experience, using an anonymous online Qualtrics survey. One was a rating scale for each phase of the workshop. The other was optional open text boxes to gain insight into participants’ ratings for each prompt. Attendees were asked to respond to the following prompts:

- Why did you choose to enrol in this course? (open textbox response)
- Rate the following statements (Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree):
  - “The pre-workshop communications helped me to feel prepared for the workshop”
  - “By the end of the day the workshop helped me to think about ways I can support my high ability (HA) students in the classroom” (*discontinued after Term 1 – deemed too similar to other questions*)
  - “The workshop helped me to understand who our HA students are: that is, how to frame/define ‘High Ability’”
  - “The student profiling activity was useful in helping me to consider what it means to create a ‘descriptive profile’ of a high ability student.”
  - “The workshop helped me to understand what it means to differentiate the curriculum for high ability students”
  - “The workshop helped me to understand how to differentiate my teaching pedagogies for high ability students”
  - “I found the online course site easy to use.”
- Do you have anything else you'd like to share with us? If so, please include a comment below (open textbox response).



## Participant satisfaction

Participant satisfaction for each activity/prompt was implied when respondents chose either “**Strongly agree**” or “**Agree**” for a prompt and was calculated by merging the number of participants who chose either of those options.

Satisfaction for the course as a whole was calculated by merging all “**Strongly agree**” and “**Agree**” ratings for each prompt and calculating a final percentage of satisfaction for the course as a whole.

## Discussion and findings

This section outlines the findings in relation to the various prompts asked of the participants including why they chose to enrol in the course and their satisfaction with course delivery.

### Why attendees chose to enrol in the course

Teacher participants from the primary and secondary course gave similar reasons for enrolling in the course (see Appendix 4 to access the complete list of direct quotes). The main reasons for enrolling were:

- Wanting practical advice/information on how to effectively cater for high ability learners.
- Wanting to take ideas back to teams/whole staff at their school.
- Capacity building of self and/or of staff.
- To develop a bank of effective and practical strategies that support the high ability learner in enrichment classes, mainstream (or both).
- It’s a whole-school focus/priority.
- To revisit/build upon past PL/knowledge about the high ability learner.
- To see what others are doing in this space.
- To network with staff from other schools “that I could continue to check in with.”
- Being part of a group from the one school who were all in attendance “to build a whole school perspective.”
- Being encouraged to attend by school leadership/mentors.
- Some past attendees enrolled due to having attended the leaders’ PL in 2023-2024 and wanting to see what has changed in the PL’s delivery and to see how the PL with classroom teacher attendees differed.
- Several HAPLs commented that they were new to the role and had enrolled in the course to gain some insight that will help them with their new role.
- To gain ideas on how to identify and cater for high ability students across the school, and
- To support and gain guidance to “create a more inclusive challenge culture” within the mainstream classroom.

‘We were excited at the opportunity of all our staff attending to build a whole school perspective’

- Primary Course attendee

## Overview of participant satisfaction

Below is an overview of participant satisfaction with the course experience according to **135** (64%) of the 211 full-day workshop attendees. General satisfaction with the whole day workshops was **90.66%** (+3.91% from 2023-2024).

**Table 2 Course Satisfaction**

Course	Overall Satisfaction	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Primary Course	92.58%	96.70%	87.50%	98.33%	90.48%
Secondary Course	89.01%	94.41%	86.84%	98.33%	79.17%
Total	90.66%	95.24%	87.10%	98.33%	85.76%

Following is a breakdown of participant satisfaction with each component of the course. For a more detailed breakdown see Appendix 4 (Quarterly reports).

## The pre-workshop communications helped me to feel prepared for the workshop.

Upon enrolment into the online website, attendees were sent an automated email inviting them to familiarise themselves with the course site, how/where/when to attend, the outline of the day, access to the Zoom link for online attendees, and access to the resources they'd be engaging with on the day. Satisfaction with this activity was **85.9%** overall, with those enrolled in the primary school attendees' course more satisfied with this activity (88.9% satisfaction) than those enrolled in the secondary school course (83.3% satisfaction).

Reasons for **satisfaction** included:

- That the activity gave a good overview of the content focus.
- It helped attendees tune in for the workshop.
- It helped attendees feel prepared and know what to bring.
- There wasn't too much information or preparation needed.
- It was very clear and accessible.
- Attendees appreciated having access to the slides prior to the workshop so they could print the handout to follow along and take notes on the day.

'Sometimes the prep can be onerous, this was not. Just enough to feel primed and ready.'

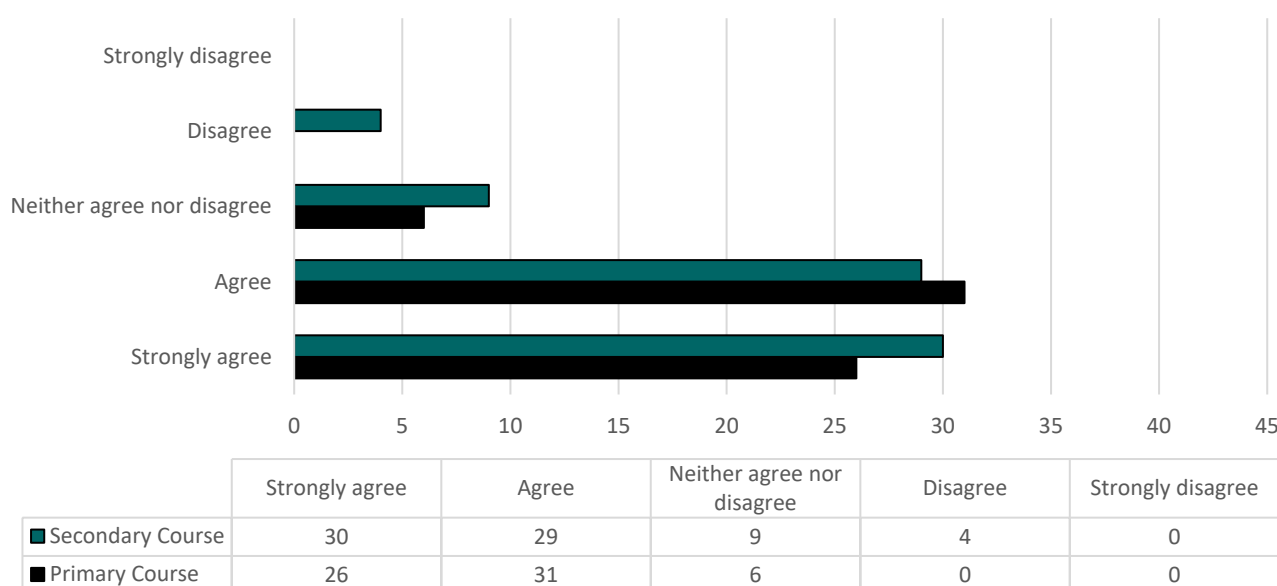
- Secondary Course attendee

**Dissatisfaction** was attributed to:

- Not having enough time to engage with the activity, whether due to late enrolment, automated welcome email link lapsing due to not activating the link within the allocated timeframe and losing time with IT troubleshooting issues, or otherwise.
- Feeling confused as to where to go and when due to misplacing the original invitation/confirmation email.
- In term 4, a platform update the day before the workshop caused access issues for participants who enrolled only a few days prior or delayed accessing the website until the day before the workshop.
- Not receiving a confirmation email.

The above shows that the Deakin team's decision to move the online platform from [redacted] (in 2023) to a Deakin hosted website in 2024-2025, and to reduce the amount of information/activities required of attendees prior to attending the PL has been positively received. The team's choice to send a separate reminder email the week prior to the workshop with a brief overview of what was expected, where to find information (e.g., the Zoom link, CHES address, dates/times, what to bring, the workshop schedule, etc.) and key contact information (for IT Support and attendance queries) has also been well received. We propose to improve our practice in 2026 by emphasising the timeframe by which attendees must activate their enrolment into the accompanying website to avoid access/IT issues prior to/on the day of the workshop.

**Figure 1 Course Satisfaction: Pre-workshop communications**



## By the end of the day the workshop helped me to think about ways I can support my high ability (HA) students in the classroom.

Attendees were guided to develop a shared understanding of how to support high ability students in the classroom or to consider how to support staff at their school to do the same. Satisfaction with the activity was at **97.2%** overall, with those enrolled in the secondary school course more satisfied with this activity (100% satisfaction) than those enrolled in the primary school attendee’s course (92.3% satisfaction).

Reasons for **satisfaction** included:

- The organised nature of the website.
- The videos (of student voice) and resources provided on the website.
- The balance between research and practice.
- Practical, tangible ideas.
- Adding to teachers’ repertoire of strategies and ideas.
- Resources and ideas that can be shared with staff at their school.
- Discussion with others at the workshop.
- Helped build confidence.
- Having time to consider and discuss how the resources and content applies to their context.
- Encouraged to think deeply and creatively about enhancing high ability students’ learning outcomes.

‘If anything I am walking away with too many ideas to explore - whole school, Domain level, cohort level, class level.’

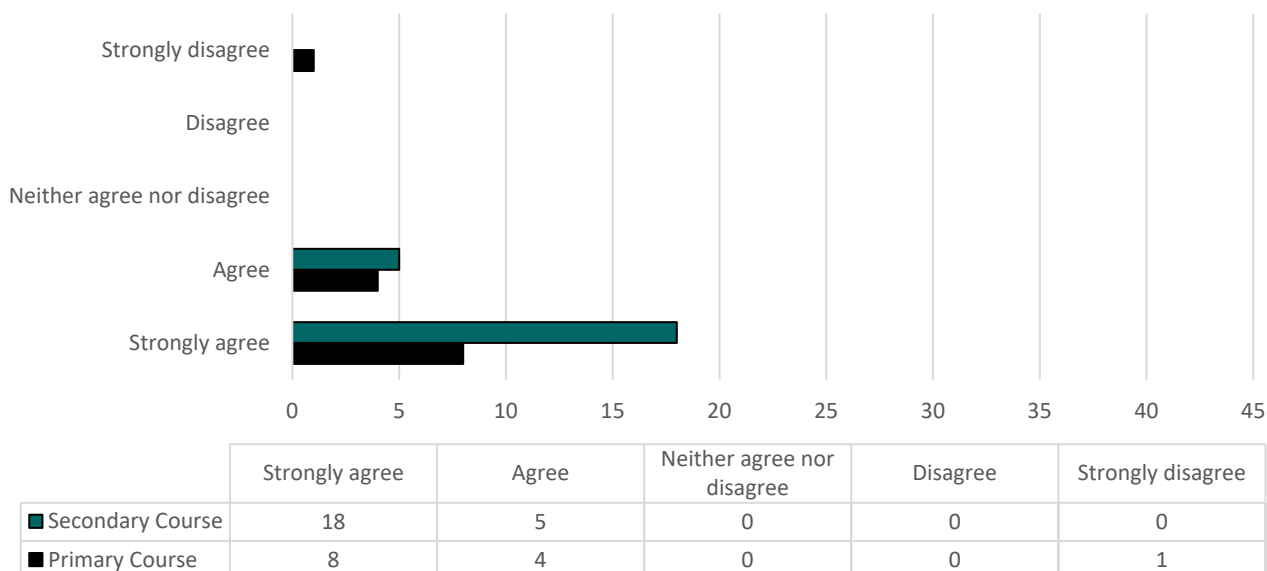
- Secondary course attendee

**Dissatisfaction** was attributed to:

- The fact that “documentation is evidence based and useful to teachers, relevant”. This response (for a strongly disagree rating) does not appear to align with the rating, calling into question whether an incorrect rating was selected by the attendee.

Upon reflection and in consultation with the CHES team, **this question was discontinued** after Term 1 to avoid duplication and confusion given that it was similar to the questions about differentiated curriculum and pedagogical practice.

**Figure 2 Course Satisfaction: Supporting High Ability Students in the Classroom**



## The workshop helped me to understand WHO our HA students are: that is, how to frame/define ‘High Ability’.

Attendees were guided to develop a shared understanding of how to identify and define what it means to be a high ability learner by engaging with a range of readings, including the Department of Education’s High Ability Toolkit definitions (Terms 1-3) and information provided on their new website (Term 4). They heard from high ability students from local primary and secondary school settings as well. Satisfaction with the activity was **92.6%** overall, with those enrolled in the primary school course more satisfied with this activity (98.4% satisfaction) than those enrolled in the secondary school course (87.5% satisfaction).

Reasons for **satisfaction** included:

- A broadening of attendees’ understandings of what it means/how high ability can manifest.
- Being provided new information and knowledge on the topic such as the four domains (intellectual, social, physical and creative high ability).
- The tools and resources that were shared.
- The discussions that facilitated engagement in the activity.
- It helped to solidify their understanding of the diversity in their school context.
- Being introduced to the concept of the twice exceptional.
- It helped them consider which high potential students may be “falling under the radar” due to their neurodiversity.
- Seeing how others have used this information back at their school (via the case studies from the 2023-2024 PL attendees).
- Previous understandings were vague/generalisable to all students. The course helped attendees look for students’ strengths to support their learning.

‘Knowing about all domains of high ability students was a big gap in my knowledge and something I now find so obvious. The academic side of high ability students is so often discussed but I hadn’t considered strategies to identify and challenge students socially and creatively too.’

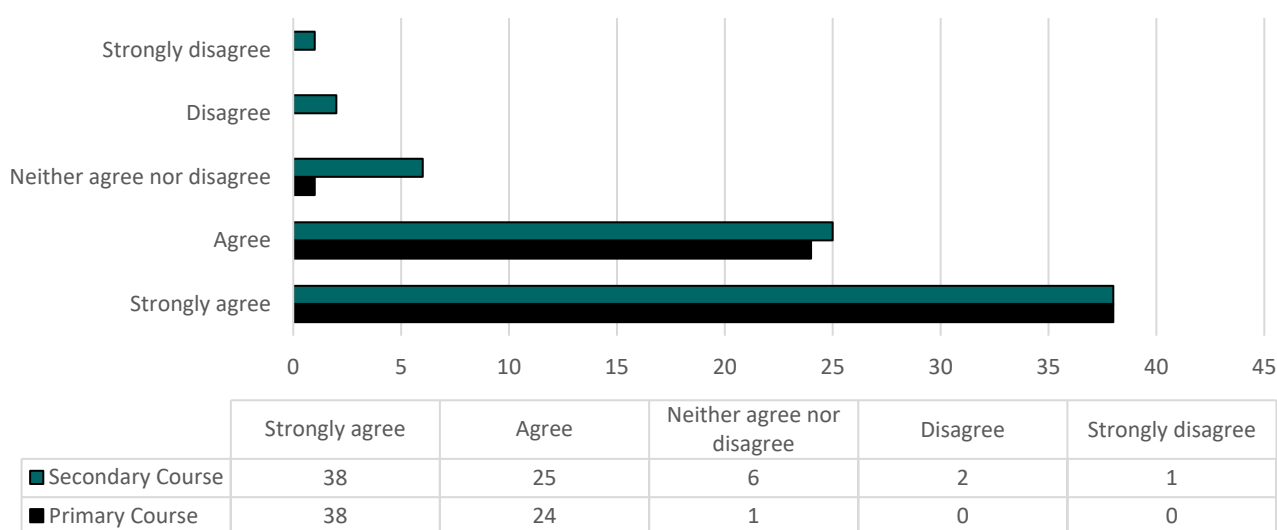
- Primary course attendee

**Dissatisfaction** was attributed to:

- The information felt generalisable to all students, not just high ability students.
- It raised questions about ways that other educators assess for the various manifestations of high ability.
- Not gaining any new knowledge due to their post-graduate studies or previous knowledge.
- Finding it challenging to distinguish between highly engaged and high ability students.

In response to the above, (most especially the second dot point under “dissatisfaction”) the Deakin team included access to two academic papers from Term 3 onwards on the various assessments used in educational settings, mapped out against the four domains of high ability. We also found it curious that the final point under ‘satisfaction’ and the first point under ‘dissatisfaction’ are in direct contrast with each other.

**Figure 3 Course Satisfaction: WHO are our High Ability learners?**



## The student profiling activity was useful in helping me to consider what it means to create a 'descriptive profile' of a high ability student.

Attendees were invited to engage with the FUSE high ability learner profiles and use them to create and discuss the benefits/challenges of creating descriptive profiles of the case study student/s (deidentified) that they brought with them from their school context. Profiling resources provided on the new DoE website were shared in Term 4. Case studies of how past participants have amended the profiles and used them in their school contexts were also shared with attendees. Satisfaction with the activity was **89.6%** overall, with those enrolled in the primary course more satisfied with this activity (95.2% satisfaction) than the secondary school attendees (84.7% satisfaction).

Reasons for **satisfaction** included:

- Gaining ideas on how the profile document can be adapted across the school to allow student voice and enable student reflection.
- Can see its potential to assist staff with IEPs and classroom planning.
- Being challenged to recognise that high ability students don't all neatly fit within the one category or 'type'.
- Seeing how the activity could be useful at the start of the school year.
- The profile document was new to some participants and helped participants to think about manifestations of high ability that they hadn't previously considered.
- Encouraged attendees to unpack their thinkings and understandings of high ability students.
- Felt inspired to consider how to change the language using strengths-based phrasing.
- The activity served to highlight that high ability students are diverse.

'I was able to look at a Year 9 accelerated class and confirm a hunch I had about them being more creative. I'm interested to see if students also view themselves in this way.'

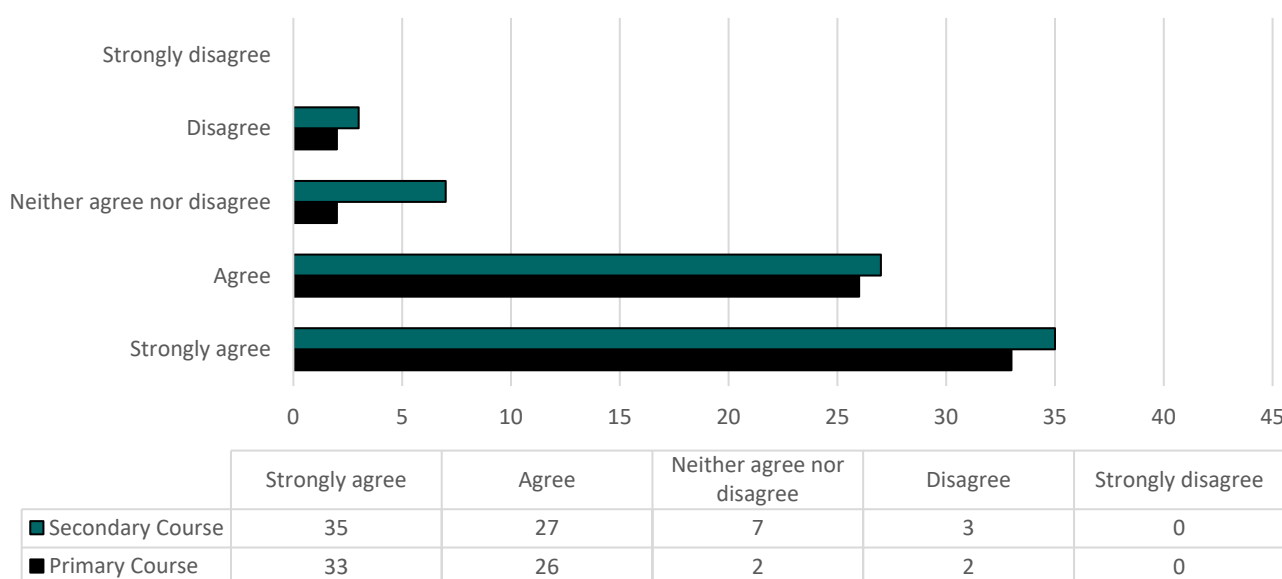
- Secondary course attendee

**Dissatisfaction** was attributed to:

- Not liking the idea of/seeing a 'danger' in profiling or categorising students.
- This being an activity that's done with all students, not just high-ability students.
- The challenge that comes with students often not fitting into one category.
- Wanting to see how these characteristics would potentially manifest in the classroom.

In response to the above, and using the outcomes of a recent study Maria Nicholas and George Aranda have just concluded, the Deakin team have exemplars they can use in 2026 to show how other teachers have revised the wording of the profiles for use with students in self-assessments, including an example of a secondary school teacher who changed the language to strength-based language and removed the 'types'/categorisations.

**Figure 4 Course Satisfaction: Descriptive profiling activity**



## The workshop helped me to understand what it means to differentiate the curriculum for high ability students.

Attendees were invited to unpack the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model V.2.0 (the elements of learning), and what the model means regarding high ability students. Participants engaged with a range of readings while doing so, viewed student voice recordings, teacher case studies and engaged in group discussions. Satisfaction with the activity was **90.4%** overall, with those enrolled in the primary school course more satisfied with this activity (92.1% satisfaction) than secondary school course attendees (88.9% satisfaction).

Reasons for **satisfaction** included:

- The resources and ideas that were shared.
- It was an important reminder that high ability students also benefit from differentiation.
- Time to explore the ways in which curriculum can be differentiated for high ability students.
- Feeling more equipped to develop higher order thinking.
- Having the time to expand teacher understanding and consider the application of these concepts to a range of discipline areas.
- Time to reflect on what attendees already do and extend/enhance their thinking.

‘These ideas helped me to focus on a few strategies that could be ‘adjustments’ rather than reinventing the wheel. Eg. the style of the activity, or the mode of content, opportunities to engage.’

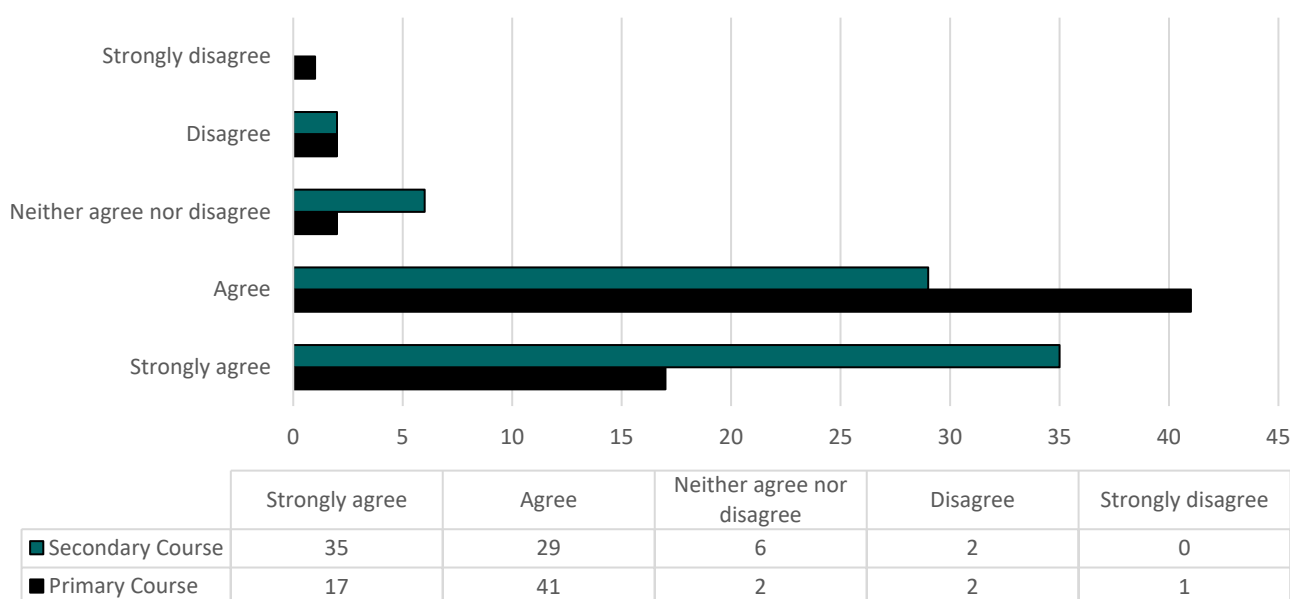
- Secondary course attendee

**Dissatisfaction** was attributed to:

- Already having advanced knowledge on the topic.
- The concept of differentiation is not new.
- Too many resources.
- Wanting specific examples of what a differentiated lesson plan looks like/videos of classroom practice.
- Wanting more time to read and discuss the case studies.

In response to the above, the Deakin team proposes reviewing the recorded CHES Conference presentations from November 13-14 2025 to see if some of those case studies may have potential to illustrate what differentiated curriculum planning could look like in practice.

**Figure 5 Course Satisfaction: Differentiating the WHAT: Curriculum**



## The workshop helped me to understand how to differentiate my teaching pedagogies for high ability students.

Attendees were invited to unpack the Victorian Teaching and Learning Model V.2.0 (the elements of teaching), and what the model means regarding high ability students – including how high ability student fit into the multi-tiered systems of support. Participants engaged with various resources, student voice video recordings and engaged in group discussion. Satisfaction with activities was rated at **94.1%** overall, with those enrolled in the secondary school course more satisfied with this activity (95.8% satisfaction) than those enrolled in the primary course (92.1% satisfaction).

Reasons for **satisfaction** included:

- The resources and ideas – for self.
- The resources and ideas – to share with staff, especially new teachers.
- Talking with others at the PL who shared ideas and strategies that attendees can implement when back at their schools.
- Being reminded of the ways that lessons can be adjusted so those adjustment options are fresh/can be implemented responsively while teaching.
- Time to collaborate in teams at the end of the day to consolidate much that was discussed and consider contextualised steps forward.
- Well-paced breakout groups throughout the day.

**‘Feeling excited and much better equipped!’**

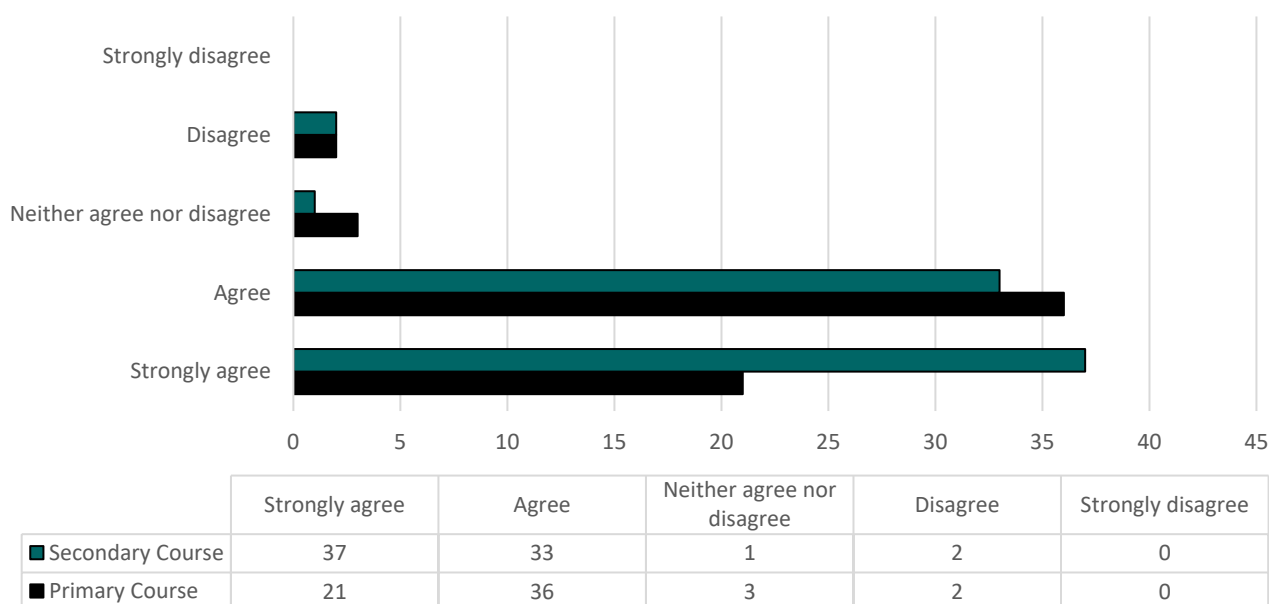
- Primary course attendee

**Dissatisfaction** was attributed to:

- Wanting high-level worked examples of lesson plans and activities that show how teachers can apply the ideas and strategies/resources that were shared.
- Wanting more research in this section of the workshop.
- Already having advanced knowledge on the topic.

In response to the above, the Deakin team proposes reviewing the recorded CHES Conference presentations from November 13-14 2025 to see if some of those case studies may have potential to illustrate what differentiated pedagogical practice could look like in the classroom.

**Figure 6 Course Satisfaction: Differentiating the HOW: Pedagogy**



## I found the online course site easy to use.

Attendees were asked to give feedback on their use of the online site. The site was used to provide access to pre-workshop communications, including workshop dates and times, access to resources that would be used on the day, Zoom links for online attendance at workshops, and provides ongoing access to resources, including past participants' action research presentation recordings (2023-2024). Satisfaction with the online site was **95.3%** overall, with those enrolled in the secondary course more satisfied with the site (90.3% satisfaction) than those enrolled in the primary course (88.9% satisfaction).

Reasons for **satisfaction** included:

- It was easy to navigate between screens and groups.
- The site was clearly set out and easy to navigate.
- It had improved since the first time past participants had attended the PLs (2023-2024).
- The presenters' ability to navigate between participant groups and the site.
- The structure was engaging.
- The layout and links.
- It was easy to use.

**Dissatisfaction** was attributed to:

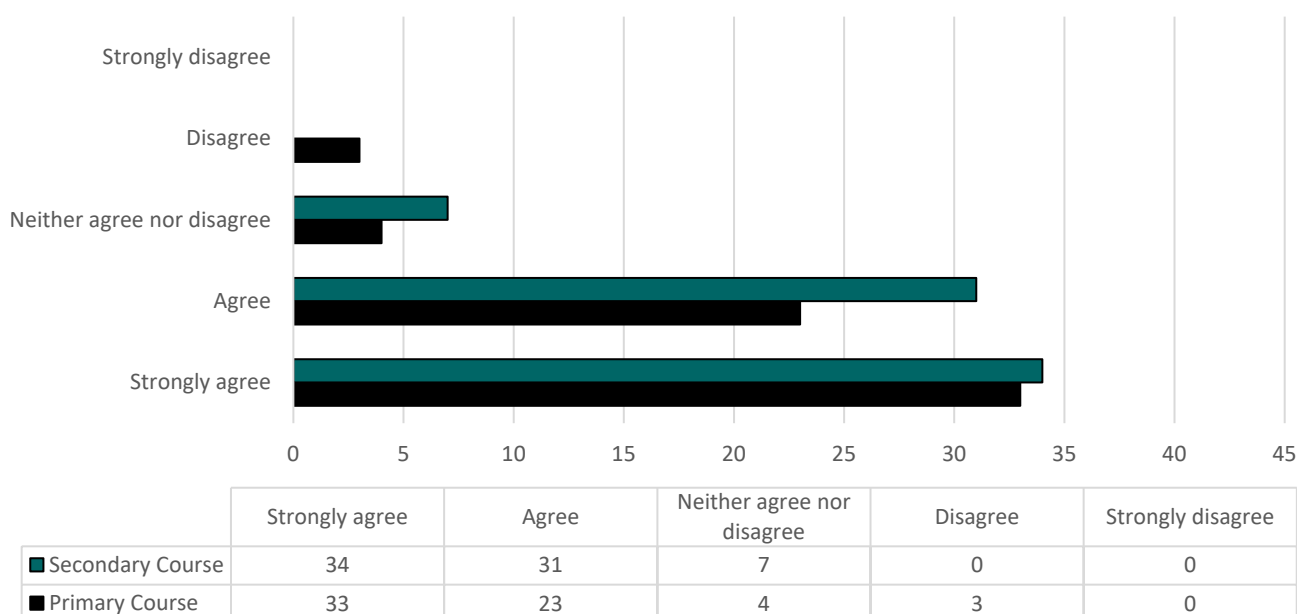
- There was a bit to navigate through and some links didn't work on the day.
- Being directed to different links, buttons and resources.
- Term 1 attendees found the constant scrolling and lack of accessible tabs challenging.
- The site crashed/there were accessibility issues for some participants during the Term 4 offering.
- The site felt crowded [*Term 4 when more resources had been added*].

'Thank you for the continual links to all resources and clear layout!'

- Primary course attendee

In response to the above, from Term 2 the Deakin team highlighted where the 'back to the top' icon could be found next to the scroll bar and highlighted the tabs that would make navigation through the site easier. A system update the day before the Term 4 workshop made some links (and in some cases access to the site) inaccessible for some participants. A system reset from the Deakin IT Support Department corrected the issue partway through the day of the first workshop. A participant has suggested inserting thumbnails next to resources to assist with users' navigation through the site. We will investigate whether this will improve navigation or may clutter the space (potentially returning to a previous issue from past years).

**Figure 7 Course Satisfaction: Online course site**



## Conclusion

From 2022-2024, and in partnership with the DoE/CHES, the Deakin University project team delivered three courses – one for primary teachers, one for secondary teachers and one for school leaders – that would “equip educators with the knowledge and skill to support High Ability students to reach their potential” with a focus on “practical provision, leaving participants well positioned to implement a variety of strategies within their own contexts”.

Feedback from attendees showed that the course met and exceeded expectations. With an aim of achieving over 80% overall satisfaction with the delivery of the program, feedback from attendees showed that participant satisfaction was 86.71% for the full-day workshop and 89.76% for the following half-day presentations. In 2025, further refinements were made to the course, resulting in a more targeted/fewer courses – reduced from 12 courses a year, to a primary course and secondary course per term, eight in total throughout 2025. In 2025, overall satisfaction with the course was at **90.66%** (+3.91% from 2023-2024).

The feedback detailed above gave much insight into the benefits participants gained from their attendance at the workshops along with the challenges they faced, which have provided valuable feedback for future reference. Delivery for the 211 participants (in 2025 – 600 attendees in total since 2023) was innovative, providing PL and networking opportunities for attendees from across the state, ranging as far afield as [redacted], [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted], though the majority (86%) hailed from schools located within 100km of Melbourne’s CBD. This was achieved by providing synchronous workshops via hyflex delivery, with some participants attending in-person at CHES while others Zoomed in online. A key highlight of the courses was the case studies of how past participants have applied their learning from the PL, the videos/recordings of student voice, and the scoping review on differentiation with high ability learners, created by members of the Deakin team for participants’ use. Participants were especially appreciative of the infographic that accompanied the scoping review, that they could easily apply for their own use or share with staff. Attendees also appreciated having the time to engage with the Victorian and NSW Departments of Education’s resources and having the time to think about how those resources can inform their own practice or the practice of their staff. Another key highlight was hearing how their colleagues from other schools address the issues commonly experienced in this space.

The Deakin University project team would like to extend their thanks to CHES principal Stewart Milner, to co-presenter (and the source/recorder of student voice) CHES lead on this project Sapphira Talbot-Strettle, and to all the staff at CHES for the opportunity to engage in this important piece of work and for their collegiality throughout.

*Below is a suite of additional comments provided by participants about their experiences.*

**Table 3 Concluding comments**

Pages 16-17  
Redacted

I've completed a lot of online learning but this, I have to say, has been the best designed one that I have completed. It was engaging and all the activities contributed to the final product. The final product was in tandem with the work at school, and has been a meaningful and useful process.'

– 2024 school leaders attendee

## Appendix 1: Workshop slide deck/schedule.

Pages 18-22 Redacted

Project IDs  
Deakin Uni:  
HAE-23-012  
DE:  
2023\_004688

# High Ability Education

Primary & Secondary School Action Plan Outcomes  
Case Studies from Victoria, Australia

February, 2025

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## Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

### Case Study #1

The assistant principal of a primary school investigated the strategies, adjustments and supports offered to high ability students (1) as documented in the IEPs of students who are working 18 months+ above the expected level in English and Mathematics and (2) as self-reported by teachers.

Self-reported strategies included “problem solving in multiple ways”; “goal setting with students”, encouraging “higher order thinking [via]... real life problems, wonder walls, rich discussions/questioning”; “inquiry based learning activities”, “having 2-3 different maths tasks following the mini lesson so students can choose their challenge”; “extending students horizontally across the curriculum... asking students to represent a concept in multiple ways”; “grouping students together to correct their work and discuss how they came to their answers”; pre-assessing and then “planning extension tasks to meet these levels [via] small group guided sessions”.

The IEP audit showed evidence of “teaching different strategies to solve one problem”; “open ended problems”; “1:1 discussion of goals”; “collaboration in small groups”; share reflection with peers”; “questioning/extension tasks”; “explicit teaching and modelling [including ‘articulating strategies’]”; “reinforcement of ‘done is better than perfect’ mantra”.



Learning Specialist matching teachers’ self reported strategy use & documented IEP strategies to the 15 Effective Strategies of Nicholas, et al. (2024).



Grade 4 teachers engaging in a jigsaw activity/collaboration and discussion: matching the 15 effective approaches icons of Nicholas et al. (2024) with the descriptor they think they may align with.

## Planning for differentiation

### Case Study #2

In Case Study #1 the assistant principal led an audit with learning specialists, to identify the 15 effective strategies (Nicholas, Skourdoumbis & Bradbury, 2024) that teachers self-reported and documented in high ability students’ IEPs. This data was collated into graphs and analysed by the leadership team so they can present the audit to staff, (1) to focus on the *strength areas* so teachers can share what they look like in practice with their colleagues and (2) identify *growth areas* that will inform future PL - the strategies teachers aren’t using or documenting as often or at all.

In Case Study #2, a learning specialist from a primary school conducted a similar action plan that operated in reverse. He began by giving his teachers a jigsaw puzzle separating the infographic of the 15 effective practices into images and descriptors. Staff were to match icons and descriptors and discuss the practices as a group. The teachers were then (1) surveyed to self-report on the practices they felt that they already use effectively; (2) presented with the outcomes of his audit of the teachers’ lesson plans that show which approaches are explicitly planned for; and (3) engaged in a group observation of a recording of a maths lesson (see graphs below).

The lesson plan audit found that there was evidence of open-ended tasks, as per the work of Peter Sullivan, with enabling and extending prompts (e.g., Enabling: “How many centimeters are there in 2m?” & Extending: “Ask students to convince you that they have all the possible answers”). However, some lessons “didn’t have any differentiation evidence” and some were “quite simple modifications” such as “add an extra place value and have a go at the same problem” or “a three-tier worksheet based differentiation of high, medium and low ability”. These modifications did not differentiate *among* high-ability students, rather it simply ensured they were doing something different to those working at or below the expected level.

He found the jigsaw activity to be a great icebreaker and opportunity (along with the survey) to find out which approaches the teachers were most familiar with and which may require PL - in this case how to plan for “multiple pathways, supporting self-management, role models and mentors, and interdisciplinary or cross curricula foci”. The video observation also generated celebrations of what is working well (e.g., “asking sharp questions” when roving) and what may require greater emphasis (e.g., “catering for interests, multiple pathways”).

What do you think you are using effectively?



What is documented in lesson planning?



What did you observe in the video of classroom practice?



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## Differentiation in Year 7 classes post-SEAL

### Case Study #3

A secondary school learning specialist was leading a change in program delivery at his school. The school moved from providing a Select Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) program for high ability (HA) learners in Years 7-9, to discontinuing the program beginning with Year 7 students from 2024. School leadership committed to providing "professional learning to all staff on identifying and addressing the needs of HA students, and effective differentiation practices" in recognition of the fact that classroom teachers would now be solely responsible for supporting the learning needs of all HA students.

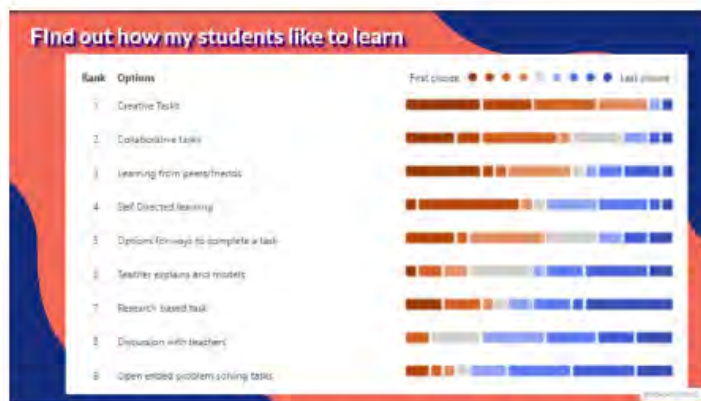
To inform the design of the professional learning program, the learning specialist (1) interviewed HA students (via a focus group), (2) conducted classroom observations and (3) surveyed teachers.

Interviews with students revealed that extension tasks are provided in some discipline areas (e.g., Maths or Italian) but in "most of my classes, we all do the same work". Students shared that the assessments are "usually pretty easy" and if they don't know the answer, they "just figure it out... myself".

Observations found that HA students often worked in mixed-ability groups, were self-directed, focused on the task, and took notes when other students responded to teacher prompts. Girls tended to write their thoughts/responses rather than answering the teacher's prompt aloud or contributing to the group discussion. When the table conversation shifted off topic, they remained on task/did not join the conversation, completing the task well before the end of the lesson.

Only 53.3% of students felt that their teacher challenges them; 60.7% that their teachers check for prior knowledge at the start of a topic; 57% that their teachers vary their activities to meet their learning needs; 39.2% that their classes "usually keep their attention". Students felt that their learning would improve with "extension tasks", "more open ended questions", "giving me different work if it's too easy"; "getting check ins" and "pushed more by teachers".

Only 3/22 teachers stated that they adjust their lessons for HA students daily; 4/22 rarely do. Teachers felt that HA students "bring up" the other students' outcomes, but it is "difficult to extend" HA students due to the "range of ability" in the class. Most of the 15 effective approaches are in use but PL is needed (e.g., none are currently use the compacting approach).



A graphical representation of students' rankings of 9 differentiation options, somewhat informed by the 15 effective approaches for HA students.

## Differentiating for SEALs

### Case Study #4

A Year 7 English SEAL teacher conducted a self-study to audit his own teaching practices and to make plans to improve program delivery. He provided students with a list of options via an online survey (somewhat based upon and later analysed against the 15 effective approaches) and asked them to rank the options. He also posed an open question, asking students to list "ways you wish you were allowed to learn in class".

The most highly rated options were: (1) creative tasks, (2) collaborative tasks and (3) learning from peers/friends.

The open question revealed that students would also like to mix the collaborative tasks with some "self-regulated options"; "digital silent reading"; "structured independent learning"; "building models in class"; "reader's theatre"; "active tasks where I can see the results of my learning"; "debating, researching"; "play educational games that help direct our learning"; "having agency to complete what we need to complete"; "listening to music"; "going outside sometimes"; "express creatively" and while some liked collaborative tasks, others wanted to "eliminate group tasks", highlighting diverse preferences across the group.

## The IEP Challenge

### Case Study #5

A High Ability Practice Leader (HAPL) from a secondary school with over 2800 students explored how she may modify the DE's IEP template to be more manageable: (1) as part of the school's new disability inclusion processes, and (2) to cater for their high ability students.

She found one section of the template to be most helpful in her teacher-student-parent conversations: "current challenges and barriers to learning and engagement". E.g., for one student, she found that "extension work is not actually more difficult, just more work" and only usually given "when he has asked", so he "learned not to ask to avoid being given extra work". She concluded that a condensed version of the template will facilitate teacher-student-parent conversations to inform goal setting/differentiation/planning. She also felt that asking students to complete a [Metacognitive Awareness Inventory](#) prior to attending would have further enriched/guided the conversations.

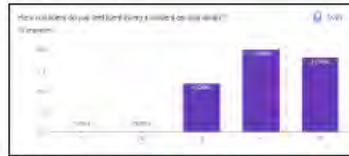


Individual Education Plan Template: Department of Education (2024)

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## Teacher Confidence

### Case Study #6



Teacher survey response: How confident do you feel identifying a student as high ability?

A leading teacher from a primary school aimed to gauge (1) teachers' common understandings of HA and (2) their confidence in catering for HA students, to create a plan of action for schoolwide improvement.

She surveyed 25 teachers and completed an initial audit of the schoolwide lesson plans/ data management systems to inform a draft plan that would be presented to the leadership team for their consideration.

The documentation audit showed that while "differentiation is an encouraged practice at the school... practices are not very consistent" for HA students. This includes the 4/25 teachers who stated that they cater for individual HA students, however none have a documented IEP.

While teacher confidence in their ability to identify HA students was neutral or high, the leading teacher found this "interesting", given the answers that the teachers gave when answering the open question "what does high ability mean?".

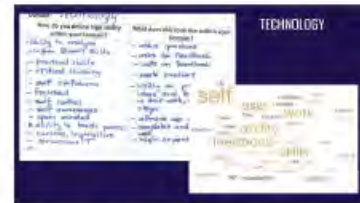
She found that "a lot of the focus" was on "seeing high academic performance". For example, "students who are achieving well above"; "a skill set that is more advanced than the expected skill set"; "perform consistently above the benchmark for their age and year level". She also found the following "interesting" seeing this "more of a compliance cooperation sort of situation": "students who can read questions and can work independently with minimal teacher intervention". She questioned how HA students are being catered for via documented lesson plans/in the classroom, "if they don't have a high ability [student] identified".

She concluded that while self-reported confidence was high, she needed to conduct PL with teachers to expand their understanding of how to identify and define a HA student, such as those provided via the [High Ability Toolkit definitions for HA](#). Her aim is to use this to achieve "consistent and effective implementation of differentiation" via the schoolwide documentation system.

## Schoolwide consensus

### Case Study #7

A learning specialist from a secondary school found that there were different requirements or talents in different subject areas leading to some students being labelled HA in some domains but not others. There was also inconsistent documentation of how HA students are catered for via lesson plans. At a PL day, teachers were presented with the [High Ability Toolkit definitions for HA](#). They then brainstormed/created Word Clouds in their domain groups that were later shared and discussed to arrive at a whole-school appreciation of (1) how HA is defined *more generally*; and (2) how it manifests in different ways *across disciplines*. This will inform an upcoming audit/revision of lesson plan templates.



Technology Domain: Table headings - How would you define HA? What does it look like in your domain?

	Intellectual	Creative	Physical	Social
<b>Evaluating the Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interdisciplinary or cross curricular foci</li> <li>Open-ended, problem-based inquiry</li> <li>Homogenous collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resourcing That Goes Beyond</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Self-Management</li> <li>Role Models and Mentors</li> <li>Mixed-Ability Collaboration and Peer Teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dialogue with Teachers</li> <li>Catering for Interests</li> <li>Resourcing That Goes Beyond Challenge and Higher-Order Thinking</li> </ul>
<b>Effective Approaches That They'd Like to See</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acceleration</li> <li>Resourcing That Goes Beyond</li> <li>Role Models and Mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Role Models and Mentors</li> <li>Allowing for Choice</li> <li>Open-Ended, Problem-Based Inquiry</li> <li>Challenge and Higher-Order Thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catering for Interests</li> <li>Multiple Pathways</li> <li>Allowing for Choice</li> <li>Inter-disciplinary or Cross-curricular Foci</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple Pathways</li> <li>Dialogue with Teachers</li> </ul>

Seeking feedback/input from HA students, based on the HA domains: Intellectual, Creative, Physical and Social

## Catering for the different HA domains

### Case Study #8

The assistant principal of a secondary school found that having a rich understanding of HA, that is, understanding that HA students can exhibit their abilities via the *intellectual domain, creatively, physically and/or socially*; enriched his school's ability to involve the student community in "formulating an authentic school-wide high ability approach".

A working party of teachers were asked to nominate students who were demonstrating characteristics from the four domains listed in the [High Ability Toolkit definitions for HA](#).

Those students were invited to be part of a workshop. They discussed what extension and enrichment entails "so we were using a common language" and were then asked which of the [15 effective approaches](#) "they thought that they were seeing a lot of and which they would like to see more of" in and outside of school. The outcomes show the diverse ways HA students who excel across the various HA domains are being catered for in the classroom/beyond and would like to be catered for in future (see image above). This feedback from students has been reported back to the working party, to inform the continued development of a schoolwide plan.

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	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6	
<b>Attitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered through assessment of results</li> <li>Discovered by observation</li> <li>Discovered by evidence collection and analysis</li> <li>Discovered through feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered through self-reflection</li> <li>Discovered through peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered through self-reflection</li> <li>Discovered through peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered through self-reflection</li> <li>Discovered through peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered through self-reflection</li> <li>Discovered through peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered through self-reflection</li> <li>Discovered through peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discovered through self-reflection</li> <li>Discovered through peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> <li>Discovered through self-reflection and peer feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Behaviours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>
<b>Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> <li>Need for challenge</li> </ul>
<b>At school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>
<b>At home</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highly motivated</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> <li>Shows high achievement</li> </ul>

An adapted version (adapted by the teacher) of Neihart & Betts' (2010) 'Revised Profiles of the Gifted and Talented'.

## Students write their own descriptive profiles

### Case Study #9



Self-reported profile

A grade 6 teacher from a primary school chose to conduct a study with six high ability students from her class, one of whom was an EAL (English as an Additional Language) learner who was "sort of below level" but "showing signs of being a great learner". The others were high achievers, according to their assessment/data profiles. The students were three girls, and three boys, three of whom were EAL learners.

was mainly "resentful and angry, there were still things in there that they could connect with". This led to the group arriving at the consensus that "they're not just one type of learner. They can connect with things across all different ways of learning. And then we made our own."

There were some key commonalities that the teacher noted across the self-reported profiles. At home, they generally wanted "less pressure". Though one student also stated that they wanted "a little bit of praise for my achievements". In terms of their attitudes and behaviours, the group mostly saw themselves as resilient and intrinsically motivated, "willing to fail and learn from it and keep

"I would like to only do necessary high level work. I do not want to do unnecessary average level work." (emphasis in original)

- Profile category: At School

The teacher aimed to investigate "how we can empower students to engage and drive their own learning" in her classroom. She mainly drew her inspiration from the Department of Education's [Amplify: Empowering students through voice, agency and leadership](#), most especially Figure 7 (p15) where the framework makes reference to "self-awareness", stating, "under 'empowering students' was 'self-awareness', and the document said that students become more engaged in learning when they can have some agency over their learning, and that means they need to know how they learn as well".

She decided to investigate if she could help her students to become metacognitive about (and talk about) how they learn using Neihart & Betts' (2010) ["Revised Profiles of the Gifted and Talented"](#). She modified the profiles "for child friendliness". This meant that she removed some of the wording that she felt was "maybe a little inappropriate and worded funny". For example, note "Type 4" in the image at the top of this page. "Type 4" was originally labelled "The At-Risk" and included the attitude "a subgroup is antisocial" which was not included in the profiles given to the Year 6 students for the purpose of this investigation. Also note the change in language for Type 3 (originally labelled "The Underground") - here "Drops out of GT & advanced classes" was changed to "Drops out of special classes for high ability students". However, she also retained much of the original language "because they are high achievers". She used "intrinsically motivated" as her example, stating that "they thought that was really great, and they all identified themselves as that".

The teacher met with the students and talked through the lists as they wrote their own "Me!" self-reported profile. She noted that there was a big emphasis on Types 1 and 6 among the group, but that the students came to the realisation that even though Type 4

going." And while most saw themselves as "self-confident", one student wrote that he "avoids risk and criticises self", which the teacher found to be "very self-aware" - a finding that she will be able to follow up with that student moving forward.

At school the students wrote that they wanted to be challenged, they wanted feedback and they wanted to meet with "like peers... They wanted extension classes and time together". These were activities she planned to prioritise moving forward, including ensuring "that we are setting SMART goals" to support the feedback cycle. She was particularly interested in the following comment from one of the students who wrote: "not always having to be the group leader" when providing feedback on what the school can do to support their learning. She stated that this is "something that I connect with, because it's so easy" to implement that kind of change in her practice/in the activities she plans for that student.

Reflecting on the process and what she would change moving forward, the teacher stated "I'd change 'I need a safe space' [within the adapted profile] because they were all like, 'Hell, yeah, I want a safe space' but that's not what the question was asking. It was asking, if they need a safe space for learning and they don't - they're all very confident learners".

Dr Maria Nicholas: [maria.n@deakin.edu.au](mailto:maria.n@deakin.edu.au)

## Are we catering for our high potential kids?

### Case Study #10

A primary school HAPL led a whole-school investigation that considered what can be done to better nurture high potential students' academic, creative and leadership potential. This was initially motivated by "a student [in her class] who has an exceptionally high IQ", (1) whose parents were saying "he's getting bored in class", and (2) who was often "moving in class", "couldn't stay focused", and "wasn't actually performing in things like writing".

Her initial audit of what teams were doing across the school found that "there wasn't much work being done for the high potential kids. It was all really for those lower end students". When presenting this back to teams, she highlighted that this was reflective of what often happens for HA students, quoting [Borland \(2005 pp.1-2\)](#) in stating that "high-ability students are

among those... most ill-served" when there is a lack of differentiation in the classroom. She also took staff through the DE's [HA student profiles](#) page and highlighted that "different areas of a [HA student's] development, such as cognitive, emotional, and social, may progress at different rates. For example: A High Ability Student may have advanced cognitive abilities but struggle with social interactions or emotional regulation".

Staff then worked in pairs to read through the FUSE HA profiles and think of any "student/s in your class who may fit this profile". They were asked to brainstorm how they differentiate for each of those students and to share their ideas with the broader group. The strategies they identified were categorised into strategies they use for (1) high achieving students,

(2) under-achieving students, and (3) the twice-exceptional. They used this to discuss strategies that could be used across categories (e.g., the use of breakout rooms, encouraging student agency when goal setting, use of reflection time to develop higher-order thinking/justify thinking, etc.). They were also encouraged to use the FUSE profiles to help create IEPs and select appropriate strategies for students of high potential.



Showing teachers how they can use the FUSE profiles document to write the 'strategies' section of the IEP.

Using the below figure as a guide, set yourself one SMART goal for this next unit in English.

#### Setting SMART goals



A screenshot from the online survey that Yr 8 and Yr 10 HA students completed about their character strengths, needs and goals.

## Goal setting in English

### Case Study #11

Two teachers from the same secondary school (an 'accelerate' Yr 8 English teacher, and an 'advanced' Yr 10 English teacher) conducted a multifaceted survey with their HA students in those classes.

The survey asked students to (1) list the subjects they find straightforward and those they find challenging; (2) complete the [VIA character strengths](#) survey and consider how their strengths could be leveraged to benefit their learning; (3) to read through the [HA learner profiles](#) and consider which habits/traits they most resonate with/list any "that specifically apply to you as a learner"; (4) identify one of their needs (from task 3) and "brainstorm ideas of how the need can be met" in the next unit: "analytical text response"; and (5) set a [SMART](#) goal for the unit. The outcomes were used to generate discussion at the subsequent teacher-student-parent conferences.

The survey data was mapped into a table that listed: (1) the subjects each student found straightforward, (2) those they found challenging, (3) their character traits, (4) attitudes, (5) behaviours, (6) needs, (7) learning supports, and (8) learning barriers. For example, 'learning supports' included technology, visuals, a quiet environment, breaks, group work, and clear instructions. 'Learning barriers' included distractions, noise, lack of resources, isolation, spelling, friends, handwriting, notetaking, and public speaking.

Results showed that the Yr 8 HA students were confident but overly reliant on the teacher. The Yr 10s were focused on academic scores but found it challenging to set measurable SMART goals, beyond wanting to "improve" a general skill. The teachers intend to use the outcomes to inform adaptations to their lesson plans.

## Modified Profiles

### Case Study #12

A learning specialist from a secondary school engaged in a similar activity to Case Study #10, using students' self-reported profiles to "better engage with and then hopefully identify our hidden high ability learners", including "students with potential to be high performing".

This focus was to account for students who have "additional learning needs" such as "language gaps" or "barriers to language" due in some cases to their EAL background, or "learners [who] may not and often do not engage in a meaningful way with standardised testing" even when English is their only language, including students who may be [twice exceptional](#).

Using the profiles, she could see why grouping Student A with Students B and C would not be helpful to those students. They also helped her to partner Student A with a likeminded peer (according to the peer's profile) for an inquiry-based [re\(Solve\)](#) unit that encouraged student "decision making and agencies".



Learning Specialist's adapted application of Neuhart & Betts' (2010) "Revised Profiles of the Gifted and Talented".

## Drawing inspiration from other schools

### Case Study #13

A learning specialist from a primary school chose to audit the assessments that the school is currently using to identify and track the outcomes of their HA students, and to seek out other potential options that may fill gaps in their system, to help teachers to: (1) identify patterns and (2) the specific abilities, of their HA students.

The learning specialist created a system that provides teachers with "a half page summary so teachers know how students are progressing throughout the term and throughout the semester... and it allows us to also quickly pick up and identify students who are well above level as well". This summary is also linked to the IEPs, with the ability to track students' long-term and short-term goals.

To further refine the data tracking system, the leadership team has established a partnership with a school that has been implementing a high ability program for 5-6 years. In particular they are interested in how the teachers identify students who excel with their critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity.

The partner school uses the [AGAT](#) (ACER General Ability Test), an assessment that looks for skills "you don't normally pick up". Students are assessed on their general reasoning: including (1) the abstract ["the ability to see patterns and logic in pictures"], (2) kinetic ["anticipate the results from the movement of objects"], (3) numerical, (4) spatial ["visualising the transformations of objects on a page"], and (5) verbal ["understanding how words connect to each other and how words within a sentence affect meaning"] ([ACER, 2024](#)).

The learning specialist found that this type of assessment is useful in identifying the skills of HA students who are perhaps "weaker" in writing-based assessments for Maths and the writing in English. It's the intention of the learning specialist to take a group of teachers to visit the school so they can see the assessment in action before deciding on how/when to add the AGAT to their own school's assessment schedule.



A screenshot of the teacher's presentation, outlining the benefits he sees in using the [AGAT](#) at his school.

Please select the extent to which you agree with each statement.

	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	To a high extent	To a very high extent
When I hear or read about new ideas, I try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like learning new things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I come across something new, I try to relate it to what I already know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to get to the bottom of difficult things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to figure out how different ideas fit together.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I don't understand something, I look for additional information to make it clearer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Selection of questions from the [Readiness to Learn \(RtL\)](#) scale

## Metacognitive Awareness and Readiness to Learn

### Case Study #14

In Case Study #14, a secondary school teacher set out to investigate how "assessing students' readiness to learn, [may] impact the visibility/identification of high ability learners with teachers, students, and families". Her motivation came from her wondering why high ability learners appeared to be "underachieving, and potentially invisible, in a specific Yr 9 cohort among our students".

She shared that her initial literature review on the topic "reinforced this view I had that, potentially as teachers, we can get very focused on knowledge and skills and curriculum and forget that if our students aren't in a place of readiness, meaning kind of self-regulated, then they're not going to pick up the offering in the room and engage with the learning". This view had her musing that teachers may fail to notice the student in the room who has *the potential* to be a high achiever, or the *underachieving* high achiever who is falling short of their full potential, due in part to a lack of awareness of and/or response to the student's readiness to learn.

For her investigation, the teacher chose to trial using two "evidence based" scales: the [Metacognitive Awareness Inventory](#) and the [Readiness to Learn \(RtL\)](#) scale. She asked the students to complete both - the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory being a true or false selection for each prompt, and the Readiness to Learn scale being a rating from 1-5 for each question. The students' teachers were also asked the same questions.

The findings of the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory showed that "students believed that they could motivate themselves and that they understood their intellectual strengths and abilities." "This aligned with what the teachers saw as well".

However, when asked about the students' readiness to learn, only 9/16 of the teachers who completed the survey stated that "70% or above" or "80% or above" of their students are ready to learn "and so this starts to identify this kind of challenge that we're seeing in the room".

In answer to the 6<sup>th</sup> prompt of the Readiness to Learn scale, 86% (19/22) of the students stated that when they don't understand something, they "look for additional information to make it clearer", "to some extent", "to a high extent" or "to a very high extent". When asked to what extent their students demonstrate this type of readiness, 5/16 (31%) of the teachers disagreed/selected the "very little" rating. This further reinforced the investigating teacher's concern about "visibility", given that some teachers felt that the students were "not able to engage with the learning, while the students felt like they could." The teachers were also asked what kinds of HA students they mostly see in their classrooms. The findings showed that teachers are noticing students with creative and intellectual ability but are not noticing many with social and physical abilities.

This study led the investigating teacher to wonder how the [learner profiles](#) may be used by teachers to help them identify and address the needs of students they don't normally notice as being of HA. E.g., "characters who are rebellious, get into power struggles, they are not being identified when actually many... are very clever and they get very bored, but their behaviour challenges and they're not presenting as ready to learn in the room" - a line of inquiry she intends to pursue next.

## Appendix 3: Attendance by school suburb

Redacted

**Appendix 4: Participant satisfaction by course – Quarterly Reports**

Pages 30-37 Redacted