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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 Specialists 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

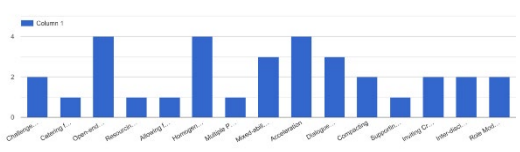
In Case Study #1 the assistant principal led an audit with learning specialists, to identify the 15 effective strategies (Nicholas, Skourdoumbis & Bradbury, 2024) that teachers self-reported and documented in high ability students' IEPs. This data was collated into graphs and analysed by the leadership 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).

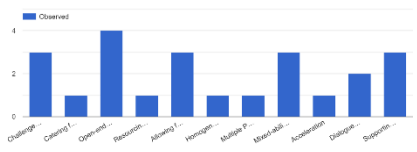
The lesson plan audit found that there was evidence of open-ended tasks, as per the work of Peter Sullivan, with enabling and extending prompts (e.g., Enabling: "How many centimeters are there in 2m?" & Extending: "Ask students to convince you that they have all the possible answers"). However, some 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").

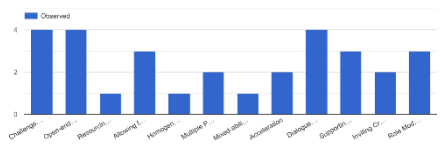
What do you think you are using effectively?



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.

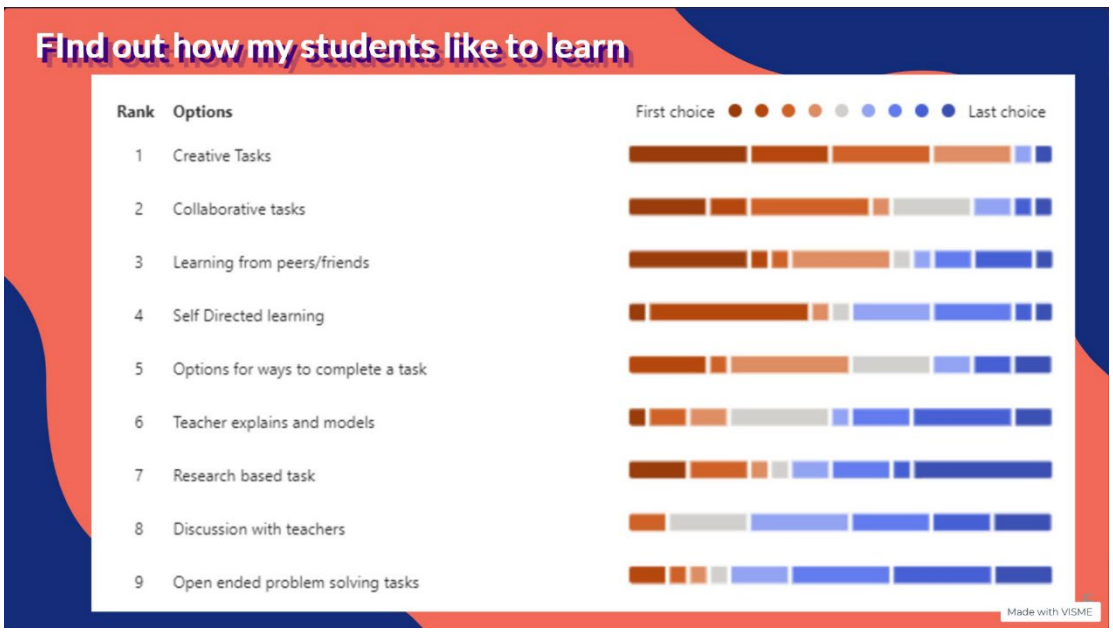
To inform the design of the professional learning program, the learning specialist (1) interviewed HA students (via a focus group), (2) conducted classroom observations and (3) surveyed teachers.

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.

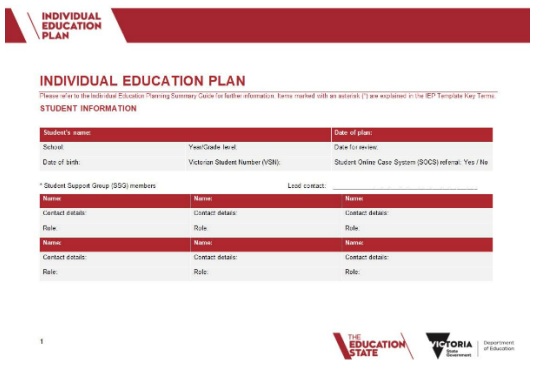
The open question revealed that students would also like to mix the collaborative tasks with some "self-regulated options"; "digital silent reading"; "structured independent learning"; "building models in class"; "reader's theatre"; "active tasks where I can see the results of my learning"; "debating, 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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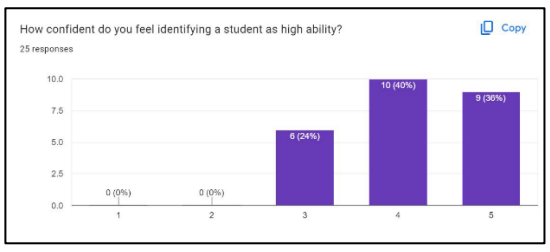
Teacher Confidence

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?

Evaluating the Data

	Intellectual	Creative	Physical	Social
Effective Approaches That They Recognise We're Doing	• Interdisciplinary or cross curricular foci • Open-ended, problem-based inquiry • Homogenous collaboration	• Resourcing That Goes Beyond	• Supporting Self-Management • Role Models and Mentors • Mixed-Ability Collaboration and Peer Teaching	• Dialogue with Teachers • Catering for Interests • Resourcing That Goes Beyond • Challenge and Higher-Order Thinking
Effective Approaches That They'd Like to See	• Acceleration • Resourcing That Goes Beyond • Role Models and Mentors	• Role Models and Mentors • Allowing for Choice • Open-Ended, Problem-Based Inquiry • Challenge and Higher-Order Thinking	• Catering for Interests • Multiple Pathways • Allowing for Choice • Inter-disciplinary or Cross-curricular Foci	• Multiple Pathways • Dialogue with Teachers

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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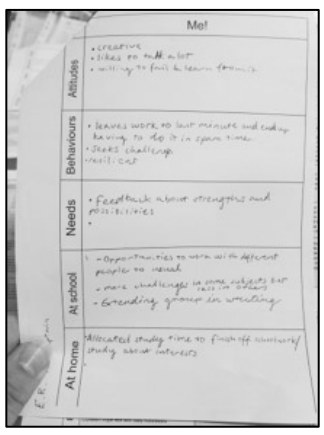
	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
Attitudes	☐Complacent (uncritical satisfaction of oneself) ☐Dependent of teacher/parent ☐Driven by extrinsic motivation and marks ☐Unsure about the future	☐Highly creative/high energy ☐Can be bored and/or frustrated ☐Impatient and defensive – non-conformist ☐Fluctuating self-esteem ☐Heightened sensitivity ☐Uncertain about social roles ☐Strongly motivated to follow inner convictions ☐Wants to right wrongs ☐High tolerance for ambiguity when working on something creative	☐Desire to belong socially ☐Unsure of their right to their emotions ☐Low self-esteem ☐Ambivalent about achievement ☐Forced-choice dilemma ☐Feel pressure to reject their achievement behaviours ☐View some achievement behaviours as betrayal of their group
Behaviours	☐Achiever ☐Seeks teacher approval ☐Avoids risks ☐Doesn't go beyond requirements ☐Accepts and conforms ☐Gets good marks ☐Is a consumer of knowledge	☐Challenges teacher ☐Questions rules and/or policies ☐Is honest and direct ☐Changeable emotional state ☐Perseveres in passion areas ☐Stands up for convictions ☐May be in conflict with peers	☐Devalue, discount or deny talent ☐Drops out of special classes for high-ability students ☐Rejects challenges ☐Moves from one peer group to another ☐Not connected to the teacher or the class ☐Unsure of direction ☐Withdraw from or resist talent development opportunities
Needs	I need • To be challenged • To recognise what my weaknesses are • To take responsible and safe learning risks • Assertiveness skills • Opportunities for creative thinking • To better understand myself as a learner	I need • To be connected with others • To learn tact, flexibility, self-awareness and self-control • Less pressure to conform • Strategies to cope with potential psychological vulnerabilities	I need • Freedom to make choices • To be a little more self-aware • be connected with cultural brokers who can help me to build bridges
At school	I wish my teachers would give me • More challenging work • Opportunities to move outside of my comfort zone (help developing stretch goals) • Mentoring either within or outside of school • Time with intellectual peers	I wish my teachers would • Go easier on me when I can't conform • Reward original, creative ideas • Use direct and clear communication • Give me a place to express my feelings • Find me a mentor	I wish my teachers would • Provide welcoming learning environments • Provide direct instruction in social skills needed to succeed in a variety of social contexts • Provide open discussions about the costs of upward mobility
At home	I wish my family would • Support my independence • Provide me freedom to make choices • give me safe risk-taking opportunities e.g. a new sport or hobby that requires effort • Don't try to 'fix' things • Affirm that I have the ability to cope with challenges	wish my family would • Respect my goals • Tolerate higher levels of nonconformity • Allow me to pursue passions • Model appropriate behaviour in terms of social interactions and tact • Affirm my strengths • Recognise when I'm feeling vulnerable and intervene when/if necessary	I wish my family would • Provide high-ability role models • Provide freedom to make choices • Not compare me with my siblings • Read or watch movies with me about others who have experienced dissonance and overcome it

	Type 4	Type 5	Type 6
Attitudes	☐Resentful, angry ☐Depressed ☐Reckless and manipulative ☐Resistant to authority ☐Not motivated by teacher driven rewards ☐Troubled, angry, irresponsible or acting out	☐Poor academic self-concept ☐Moody, frustrated, angry ☐Don't fit in with peers ☐Learned helplessness ☐Believe that they have failed at school ☐Discouraged ☐Social or emotional difficulties ☐Behaviour problems ☐Depressed and/or anxious	☐Self-confident and self-accepting ☐Optimistic ☐Intrinsically motivated ☐Ambitious and excited ☐May not view academics as one of their highest priorities ☐Willing to fail and learn from it ☐Shows tolerance and respect for others
Behaviours	☐Creates crises and causes disruptions ☐Serious emotional and behavioural issues ☐Unrealistic expectations for themselves ☐Low academic achievement ☐Criticises self and others ☐Engage in thrill seeking behaviour ☐Intermittent attendance ☐Doesn't cope well with daily frustrations	☐Seems average or below average ☐Thinks conceptually ☐Slow in information processing ☐Disorganised ☐Inconsistent work ☐Good problem solvers	☐Appropriate social skills ☐Works independently, self-directed ☐Sets SMART goals ☐Seeks challenge ☐Follows strong areas of passion ☐Good self-regulators ☐Stands up for convictions ☐Resilient ☐A producer of knowledge
Needs	I need • Safety and structure • A 'safe space' to go to • An individualised program • Professional counselling	I need • An emphasis put on my strengths • to be taught coping strategies such as meditation and mindfulness • Skill development in areas of weakness • Opportunities to work in areas of strength with like-minded peers	I need • Someone to advocacy for new directions and increasing independence • Feedback about strengths and possibilities • Facilitation of continuing growth • Support for risk taking • On-going, genuine, empathetic and positive relationships • To become more adept at managing themselves • A support team
At school	I wish my teachers would • Not lower expectations • Provide individual support for academic areas • Explicitly team me study skills • Provide me with mentoring to improve our relationship	I wish my teachers would • Explicitly teach me some personal and social skills • Accelerate me in areas that I show strength • Develop with me some SMART goals	I wish my teachers would • Develop a long-term integrated plan of study • Remove time and space restrictions • Develop mentors and cultural brokers • Provide a wide variety of accelerated options • Waive traditional school policies and regulations • Help me cope with the psychological cost of success
At home	My family should • Assess for dangerous behaviour • Avoid power struggles with me • Find extra-curricular activities of interest • Maintain close contact with school	I wish my family would • Recognise and affirm high abilities • Provide safe risk-taking opportunities • Discuss and promote aspirations • Advocate for me at school	I wish my family would • Advocate for me at school and in the community • Provide opportunities related to my passion areas • Allow friends of all ages • Remove time and space restrictions for learning • Help me build a support team • Include in family decisions making • Listen

An adapted version (adapted by the teacher) of Neihart & Betts's (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.

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's (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 funnily". 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 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 going." And while most saw themselves as "self-confident", one students 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.

> "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

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".

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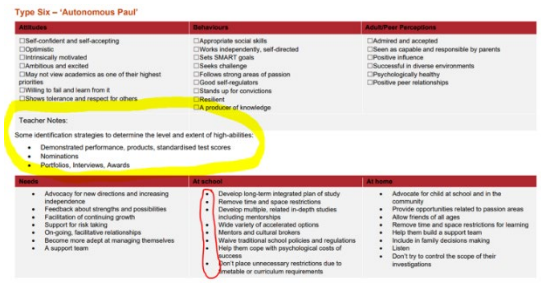
Are we catering for our high potential kids?

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 class-room. 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.

A screenshot from the online survey that Yr 8 and Yr 10 HA students completed about their character strenghts, 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 leaner"; (4) identify one of their needs (from task 3) and "brain-storm 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.

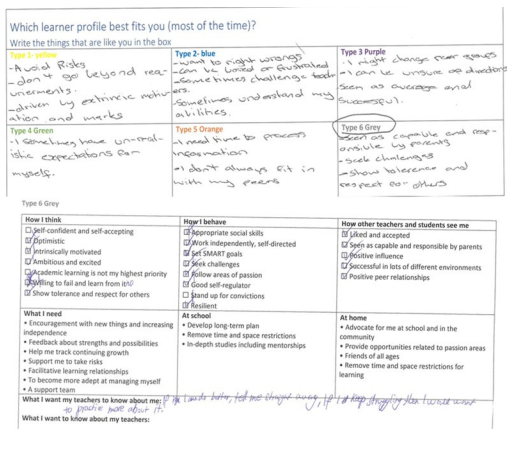
Modified Profiles

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 Neihart & Betts's (2010) "Revised Profiles of the Gifted and Talented".

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.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like learning new things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I come across something new, I try to relate it to what I already know.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to get to the bottom of difficult things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to figure out how different ideas fit together.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I don't understand something, I look for additional information to make it clearer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Selection of questions from the Readiness to Learn (RtL) scale (no longer available - alternative available here)

Drawing inspiration from other schools

Case Study #13

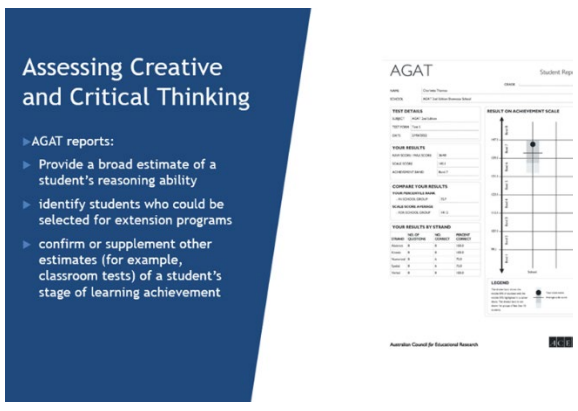
A learning specialist from a **primary school** chose to audit the assessments that the school is currently using to identify and track the outcomes of their HA students, and to seek out other potential options that may fill gaps in their system, to help teachers to: (1) identify patterns and (2) the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

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 6th 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.

Want to know more about this project? Please contact the project lead: Dr Maria Nicholas, Deakin University, maria.n@deakin.edu.au