Chapter 6
Students Who Are Gifted

Chapter Summary

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Characteristics of Students Who Are Gifted

Each child who is gifted has an individual profile of abilities, needs, interests, and learning preferences; however, there are a number of general characteristics associated with giftedness that become apparent early in life. Some of these characteristics appear in students at all ability levels, but they are more prevalent in students who are gifted. For instance, many students demonstrate heightened sensitivity and perfectionism, but in students who are gifted these tendencies are more predominant and appear at more extreme levels.

Common Intellectual Characteristics of Gifted Students

Trait or Aptitude	Behavioural Examples
Advanced Intellectual Achievement	• Takes great pleasure in intellectual activity. • Has high aspirations. • Easily grasps new ideas and concepts and understands them more deeply than same-aged peers. • Easily memorizes facts, lists, dates, and names. • Enjoys playing challenging games and making elaborate plans. • Appears bored or impatient with activities or people.
Motivation and Interest	• Requires little external motivation to follow through on work that initially excites. • Demonstrates persistence in pursuing or completing self-selected tasks in and out of school. • Develops interests independently. • Has unusual or advanced interests in a topic or an activity, but may move quickly from one activity or interest to another. • Asks a lot of questions—one after another. • Asks tough questions about abstract ideas like love, relationships, and the universe. • Has a great deal of energy and may need constant stimulation.
Verbal Proficiency	• Talks early and pronounces words correctly from the start. • Develops a large and advanced vocabulary, and uses complex sentence structures. • Makes up elaborate stories. • Enjoys memorizing and reciting poems and rhymes. • Teaches himself or herself to read. • Easily and spontaneously describes new experiences, and explains ideas in complex and unusual ways.
Problem-Solving Ability	• Thinks logically, given appropriate data. • Uses effective, often inventive strategies for recognizing and solving problems. • Devises or adopts a systematic strategy to solve problems, and changes the strategy if it is not working. • Reasons by analogy, as in comparing an unknown and complex process or scenario to a familiar one (e.g., design and build a robotic arm to function as a human arm). • Extends prior knowledge to solve problems in new situations or applications. • Creates new designs and inventions. • Shows rapid insight into cause-and-effect relationships.

Trait or Aptitude	Behavioural Examples
Logical Thinking	• Enjoys counting, weighing, measuring, and categorizing objects.
	• Loves maps, globes, charts, calendars, and clocks.
	• Prefers his or her environment to be organized and orderly.
	• Gives (or demands) logical, reasonable explanations for events and occurrences.
	• Comes up with powerful, persuasive arguments for almost anything.
	• Complains loudly if he or she perceives something as unfair or illogical.
Creativity	• Comes up with new ideas and concepts on his or her own, and applies them in creative and interesting ways.
	• Uses materials in new and unusual ways.
	• Has lots of ideas to share.
	• Creates complicated play and games, or adds new details and twists to stories, songs, movies, and games.
	• Responds to questions with a list of possible answers.
	• Escapes into fantasy and appears to have trouble separating what's real from what's not.
	• Goes off in own direction rather than following instructions.
	• Spends a lot of time daydreaming or thinking, which may be perceived as wasting time.
	• Makes up elaborate excuses or finds loopholes to evade responsibility for own behaviours.

Common Affective Characteristics of Gifted Students

Trait or Aptitude	Behavioural Examples
Heightened Sensitivity	• experiences emotions strongly and may be emotionally reactive. • reacts strongly and personally to injustice, criticism, rejection, or pain. • demonstrates, at an early age, an understanding and awareness of other people's feelings, thoughts, and experiences, and can be upset by other people's strong emotions. • is easily excited or moved to tears. • appreciates aesthetics and is able to interpret complex works of art. • shares feelings and ideas through one or more of the arts. • is extremely observant and able to read non-verbal cues. • exhibits heightened sensory awareness (e.g., is over-selective about food and clothing choices). • may become fearful, anxious, sad, and even depressed. • responds emotionally to photographs, art, and music.
Heightened Intensity	• is energetic and enthusiastic • becomes intensely absorbed in various pursuits, sometimes ignoring school responsibilities as a result • has strong attachments and commitments • goes further than most students would to pursue an interest, solve a problem, find the answer to a question, or reach a goal • collects things • is extremely persistent and focused when motivated, but has a limited attention span for things that are not of interest • appears restless in mind and body • gets easily frustrated and may act out
Perfectionism	• sets high (often unrealistic) expectations of self and others • is persistent, perseverant, and enthusiastically devoted to work • gives up if own standards are not met or if a mistake is made • is self-evaluative and self-judging • experiences feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, and desires frequent praise and reassurance • becomes extremely defensive of criticism
Introversion	• has deep feelings and a complex inner life • is reflective and introspective • focuses on inner growth through searching, questioning, and exercising self-corrective judgement • is knowledgeable about own emotions • withdraws into self rather than acting aggressively toward others

Trait or Aptitude	Behavioural Examples
Moral Sensitivity and Integrity	• is concerned about ethical issues at an early age • has strong moral convictions • is capable of advanced moral reasoning and judgement • places a strong value on consistency between values and actions in self and others • is extremely aware of the world • is altruistic and idealistic (desires to enhance caring and civility in the community and in society at large) • assumes responsibility for others and self
Sense of Humour	• makes up riddles and jokes with double meanings • makes up puns and enjoys all kinds of wordplay • plays the class clown • can be disruptive or get frustrated when others don't "get it" • does not understand or seem to appreciate the humour of other students

Asynchronous Development

Asynchronous development can also be a characteristic of giftedness. Asynchrony means that the rates of intellectual, emotional, and physical development are uneven. This means that students who are gifted may be significantly out of developmental step with their same-age peers.

Students with asynchronous development
• may be more complex and intense than same-age peers
• may feel incompatible with other students their age and with learning and recreational activities designed for their age group
• appear to be different ages in different situations, which could result in difficulties adjusting emotionally and socially

These tendencies increase with the child's degree of giftedness. Students who experience asynchronous development need a sensitive and flexible approach from teachers in order to develop to their full potential. The greatest need of these students is an environment where it is safe to be different.

Implications for Learning and Teaching

For some children who are gifted, a combination of the characteristics mentioned on the previous page may lead to difficulties with peer relations, avoidance of risk-taking, or excessive self-criticism.

To address these concerns, consider how students' individual characteristics are linked to specific learning needs. The following chart illustrates sample characteristics and the learning needs that may be associated with them.

Characteristic	Learning Need
• unusual retentiveness	• exposure to quantities of information
• advanced comprehension	• access to challenging learning activities
• varied interests	• exposure to a wide range of topics
• high level of verbal skills	• opportunities for in-depth reflection and discussion
• accelerated pace of thinking	• individually paced learning
• flexibility of thought processes	• challenging and diverse problem-solving tasks
• goal-directed behaviours	• longer time-spans for tasks
• independence in learning	• more independent learning tasks
• analytical thinking	• opportunities for higher-level thinking
• self-motivation	• active involvement in learning
• emotional sensitivity	• opportunities to explore and reflect on affective learning
• interest in adult issues	• exposure to real-world issues
• holistic thinking	• integrated approach to learning
• avid reader	• access to diverse materials

Individualized Program Plans (IPPs)

All students who are identified as having special education needs, including students who are gifted and talented, require individualized education plans (IEPs).

A student's IEP will contain essential information about his or her strengths and needs, current level of performance, specialized assessment results, recommended supports, and instructional strategies that will be most effective for the student. The student's learning team will also develop a number of long-term goals and measurable objectives (usually one to three per year for a student who is gifted).

The second language teacher is an important member of the learning team. Participating in planning meetings and becoming familiar with information in the IEP will allow teachers to actively support a student's long-term goals and success across subject areas.

Characteristic/Learning Need Chart: This chart adapted from the Department of Education, State of Victoria, *Bright Futures Resource Book: Education of Gifted Students* (Melbourne, Australia: Department of Education, State of Victoria, 1996), p. 30. Copyright owned by the State of Victoria (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development). Used with permission.

Flexible Pacing

Flexible pacing allows students to move through the curriculum at their own rate; it lowers repetition and potential boredom by reducing the amount of time students must spend on outcomes they have already mastered. Completing outcomes in a reduced time frame provides more time for students to participate in more challenging activities.

How to successfully implement flexible pacing:

1. Identify learning objectives for the whole class according to the program of study.
2. Pretest the entire class to identify students who would benefit from an opportunity to work at a faster, more independent pace.
3. Plan appropriate alternative activities.
4. Eliminate unnecessary practice and review activities for those students who have mastered the material.
5. Keep accurate records of activities and assessments to ensure individual students have the opportunity to explore all learning outcomes.

Enrichment Strategies

The following section outlines sample enrichment strategies that teachers can use to differentiate the planning and delivery of instruction.

Grade/Curriculum Focus	Whole Group Activity	Suggestion for Differentiation
Grade 4 • Developing reading skills in Ukrainian	• Class reads a grade-level story and discusses.	• Students read a story written above grade level and develop a graphic organizer to illustrate understanding.
Grade 5 • Explain personal viewpoints (e.g., favourite television show or time of year)	• Working in small groups, students hare their impressions of a recently viewed television show by preparing a survey and administering it to their classmates. They tally the results and write a short report on the various viewpoints of their fellow students..	• Students choose a controversial topic and in Ukrainian present supporting arguments to explain their viewpoint. They should be prepared to defend their opinion when challenged by their classmates..
Grade 6 • Explore the use of language for imagination, humour, and fun	• Students play a variety of traditional sports or games in Ukrainian.	• Based on their research and understanding of the language and culture, students develop a new game and teach it to the class in Ukrainian.

Alternative activities challenge students who have already mastered the learning outcomes in the grade-level program of studies. These activities can take many forms and should challenge the students' thinking abilities and push them to engage more deeply in the content area.

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Appendix C: Alternative Learning Activities Menu

Alternative learning activities provide different types of learning tasks that may be more challenging and appropriate for students who are gifted. Some topics can be developed into a series of challenging learning activities organized in an alternative learning activities menu. Students can choose a number of activities from the menu to complete independently or with a partner during class instruction time. See the following sample menu.

Alternative Learning Activities Menu

Complete three activities to create a horizontal, vertical, or straight line. If you choose to use the "Your Idea" box, you must first have your activity approved by your teacher.

I have had my idea approved by my teacher: Yes/No   Teacher Initials _____

I agree to complete all three activities by _____ (Date)

DEMONSTRATE	PLAN	INTERVIEW
In Ukrainian, demonstrate the preparation of a nutritious snack for the class and then share the results!	Plan a menu for a class party. Write a grocery list in Ukrainian for your party supplies.	In Ukrainian, interview other students about their snacking habits. How do they try to make healthy choices?
RESEARCH	**YOUR IDEA**	**SURVEY**
Research traditional foods enjoyed in Ukraine during major holidays.		In Ukrainian, develop a survey about students' favourite lunch foods. Ask your classmates to complete the survey.
DISPLAY	**CREATE**	**EVALUATE**
Design a display board that illustrates favourite foods of the class and that includes the Ukrainian words and phrases for each food.	Create a replica of a small coffee shop in the corner of the classroom, complete with menus and signs in Ukrainian. Use this set for role-playing ordering in a restaurant, meeting new people, or having a conversation in Ukrainian.	In Ukrainian, create a rubric to evaluate your performance in one of the other activities on this menu.

Many students who are gifted enjoy and benefit from opportunities to individually investigate course topics. Components of an independent study program include

- identifying and developing a focus
- developing skills in creative and critical thinking
- using problem-solving and decision-making strategies
- learning research skills
- developing project-management strategies
- keeping learning logs
- reflecting on and evaluating the process and product
- sharing the product with an intended audience from beyond the classroom
- keeping a portfolio of results.

Independent studies help students move from being teacher-directed to being student-directed. With teacher support and coaching, the students learn how to decide on a topic, develop a plan of action, follow it through, and monitor their process. Students take part in developing criteria for evaluation and work collaboratively with the teacher.

Possibilities for independent study include

- writing and recording a script
- creating a magazine or picture book on a topic of interest
- developing a slide show presentation on a topic of interest and presenting it to other students
- creating a display about a story read or country researched
- developing a puppet show on a related topic
- writing a new ending to a story or movie
- creating a story to share with others

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Appendix C: Sample Independent Study Agreement

Students need to be well prepared to work independently, and they need to be clear on the product, processes, and behavioural expectations.

Students who are gifted will need instruction and ongoing support to manage and benefit from independently completing alternative learning activities. Some students may benefit from an independent study agreement that outlines learning and working conditions and lays out basic expectations.

Sample Independent Study Agreement

Name:	**Grade:**	**Date:**

This is a contract between you and your teacher. By writing your initials on each of the blanks beside the statements, you agree to complete each of the activities. If you do not meet the conditions set in this contract, you will have to return to the class and your project will be discontinued immediately.

Read each statement below and write your initials beside it to show your understanding and agreement.

Learning Conditions

_____ I will complete all alternative learning activities in my Independent Study Agreement by _____ (date).

_____ I will prepare for and complete the unit's assessment at the same time as the rest of the class.

_____ I will participate in whole-class activities as the teacher assigns them.

_____ I will keep a daily log of my progress in my Learning Log.

_____ I will share what I have learned from my independent study with the class in an interesting way. I will prepare a brief presentation of five to seven minutes and make sure that I include some kind of a visual aid (e.g., poster, picture, digital slide show).

Working Conditions

_____ I will check in with the teacher at the beginning and end of each class period.

_____ I will work on my chosen topic for the entire class period on the days my teacher assigns.

_____ I will not bother anyone or call attention to the fact that I am doing different work than others in the class.

Student's Signature _____

Teacher's Signature _____

Date _____

Sample Independent Study Agreement: Excerpted from *Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom: Strategies and Techniques Every Teacher Can Use to Meet the Academic Needs of the Gifted and Talented* (Revised, Expanded, Updated Edition) (p. 75) by Susan Winebrenner, copyright ©2001. Used with permission of Free Spirit Publishing Inc., Minneapolis, MN; 800–735–7323; <www.freespirit.com>. All rights reserved.

Advanced Thinking Processes

Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom 1956) is a model frequently used as a guide when designing themes, units, learning activities and assignments that promote higher levels of thinking. Bloom proposes that at the most basic level people acquire knowledge and comprehension. At higher levels people learn how to apply principles and to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize. Assuming that students have no background in a topic of investigation, they would move from knowledge and comprehension to application before working with the higher-order skills of analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. The latter three levels are associated with critical thinking.

Taxonomy of Thinking

1.

Category	Definition	Activities	Sample Products
Knowledge	Ability to remember previously learned facts and ideas	tell • recite • list • memorize • remember • define • locate	workbook pages • quiz or test • skill work • vocabulary • facts in isolation

lower to higher

Illustrative Examples
- Recite the names of family members (e.g., mother, grandfather, sister) in Ukrainian.
- Draw a family tree and label the relationships between family members in Ukrainian.

Caution
Teachers should be aware that some students may live in foster or group homes and/or may not have a traditional family structure. Alternative activities may be necessary.

2.

Category	Definition	Activities	Sample Products
Comprehension	Understand concepts and information.	restate in own words • give examples • explain • summarize • translate • show symbols • edit	drawing • diagram • response to question • revision • translation

Illustrative Examples
- Explain how to play a game in Ukrainian.
- Demonstrate how something works in Ukrainian.

3.

Category	Definition	Activities	Sample Products
Application	Transfer knowledge learned from one situation to another.	demonstrate • use guides, maps, charts, etc. • build • cook	recipe • model • artwork • demonstration • craft

Illustrative Examples
- Interview a school volunteer who speaks Ukrainian.
- Listen to a partner describe an object in Ukrainian and draw what your partner describes.
- Write journal entries from the point of view of a new Ukrainian-speaking person arriving in your city or town.

Taxonomy of Thinking (continued)

4.

Category	Definition	Activities	Sample Products
Analysis	Understand how parts relate to a whole. Understand structure and motive. Note fallacies.	investigate • classify • categorize • compare • contrast • solve	survey • questionnaire • plan • solution to a problem or mystery • report • prospectus

Illustrative Examples
- Develop a simple story in Ukrainian. Black out key phrases and trade with partners to fill in missing sections.
- Choose an important vocabulary word in Ukrainian and create a web showing its meaning, origin, usage, and related words.
- Create a Venn diagram comparing English and Ukrainian languages.

5.

Category	Definition	Activities	Sample Products
Evaluation	Establish criteria and make judgments and decisions.	judge • evaluate • give opinions • give viewpoint • prioritize • recommend • critique	decision • rating • editorial • debate • critique • defence • verdict • judgment

lower to higher

Illustrative Examples
- Listen to two short stories in Ukrainian and explain which one you prefer and why.
- Develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of an ad and then rate the effectiveness of three ads from a Ukrainian language magazine.

6.

Category	Definition	Activities	Sample Products
Synthesis	Re-form individual parts to make a new whole.	compose • design • invent • create • hypothesize • construct • forecast • rearrange parts • imagine	lesson plan • song • poem • story • advertisement • invention • other creative products

Illustrative Examples
- Compose a song in Ukrainian.
- View a travel film for Ukraine and plan the activities for a seven-day vacation with your family.

Mentorships

Mentorships give students opportunities to develop dynamic relationships with adult experts who share their passion for a specific area of interest. In a successful mentorship, the mentor and student will have complementary teaching and learning preferences and will engage in a mutual exchange of knowledge.

Mentorship is an ideal vehicle for facilitating the differentiated learning needs of students who are gifted. Mentorships provide opportunities for students to engage with native language speakers for a variety of purposes, such as interviews, individual projects, conversation practice, connection to the local cultural community and exploring career options. Alternatively, students can share the language learning process with an adult learner who can encourage metacognitive development by exploring and discussing language learning strategies.

Guidelines for mentorships:

1. Identify what (not whom) the students need.

2. Discuss with the students whether they would like to work with a mentor and if so, what they would like to gain from the relationship.

3. Identify appropriate mentor candidates. Explore contacts from the local community. Conduct the appropriate reference checks as directed by school jurisdiction policy.

4. Interview and screen the mentors. Be explicit about the students' goals and learning strategies and about potential benefits for both the students and the mentors. Provide training as required.

5. Match mentors with students.

6. Prepare students for the mentorship. Ensure that they understand its purpose, benefits, limitations and commitments. Write down the participants' roles and responsibilities.

7. Monitor the mentor relationship to ensure that it is achieving its goals. Renegotiate the relationship as needed, and seek new mentors if students are not benefiting.

Providing Additional Opportunities

→ **For more information …**

Appendix C:
Sample Text Forms

Language learning can be enriched by giving students opportunities to use language for authentic purposes. This can include conversations with native speakers and others who speak the language fluently, such as parents, older students, community members, members of cultural associations, and other classroom visitors. Students will benefit from listening and speaking with these resource people and from working on enrichment activities and projects with them. Another option is to link the class with a peer class so that students can have ongoing writing exchanges and can engage in joint learning projects. For students who learn quickly, using Ukrainian to engage in communication for real purposes can lead to significant enrichment and satisfaction.

In addition, students who are gifted will often benefit from access to a wide variety of print and media resources. These students can often handle more challenging reading levels and may be eager to learn about more complex or specialized subject areas. Libraries, the Internet, and cultural organizations are all good sources for supplemental resources.