

Revisiting gifted education

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Background

This literature review summarises the gifted education research base. It synthesises the best-quality available research into the learning characteristics of gifted students. It also provides summaries of the research on effective practices in gifted education for schools and teachers.

Main findings

Gifted students need more challenging learning with greater depth and complexity

Gifted students can have a level of cognitive function typical of students several years older, with high levels of fluid thinking, reasoning and working memory function. Teaching programs, feedback, deliberate practice, and opportunities to access advanced learning are all necessary to help gifted learners achieve at a high level and develop their talent over time.

Gifted students are found in all social groups

Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds underachieve because of fewer opportunities to learn and develop their talent. Gifted students can also have a co-existing disability, which means they require support for their disability as well as talent development to help them reach their educational potential.

Lack of adequate challenge can contribute to social and emotional challenges

Key social and emotional challenges for gifted students include boredom, disengagement, and perfectionist-type behaviours. Challenging school learning experiences, along with positive social relationships and a supportive school environment, can help gifted students thrive.

Gifted students benefit from explicit teaching and well-structured learning

Like all students, gifted learners require scaffolding and structure in learning to help manage the demands of cognitive load. Explicit teaching and guided inquiry are just as necessary for gifted students as for all students. Gifted learners may be able to move through structured and scaffolded activities at a faster pace, and then can benefit from problem solving and applied tasks.

Specific strategies are also needed to help gifted students achieve their best

There is strong research to support teaching practices that help align the challenge, complexity, depth and pace of learning with the learning needs of gifted students. This can be done through evidence-based effective strategies such as curriculum acceleration, extension and enrichment learning experiences.

More information

A literature review of the gifted education research base can be found here: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/revisiting-gifted-education>.