THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Planning for differentiation: Challenges and opportunities

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Dr Gemma Scarparolo
gemma.scarparolo@uwa.edu.au @ScarparoloGemma

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What challenges do you have regarding differentiation for gifted students?

- Training teachers how to differentiate in a quality way and ensure students are extended.
- Keeping track of individual programs
- Staff perception around what is expected - think they should also be well behaved; staff engagement and willingness to provide differentiation to gifted students as they should be able to look after themselves.
- Others' perceptions around behaviour and engagement levels.
- Getting their buy in. They don't want to be seen as different
- Changing the attitudes and preconceptions that classroom teachers may hold about 'gifted' students and 'giftedness' and the need to cater for these students as much as all other students.
- Ensuring that classroom teachers have a thorough understanding of the needs of gifted students and the importance of differentiating for them.
- The knee-jerk reaction to differentiate from the middle out instead of top down
- Identification of student abilities and suitable differentiation strategies.
- Identifying and understanding giftedness in indigenous students

Teacher Responses

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What challenges do you have regarding differentiation for gifted students?

- Teacher buy in. Having teachers take ownership over their students and not assume it's someone else's job to cater for their gifted students. Also having teachers understand that a student who has a FSIQ in the >99th percentile still needs to be taught, they aren't born knowing everything. That the higher the IQ, the higher the likelihood that they will likely have social and emotional sensitivities and needs along with mental health concerns.
- Support from school leadership/flexibility in assessment or unit structures and timelines
- Keeping the modified tasks fun and engaging and not letting the gifted child lose interest because they are bored by the lessons taught for the remaining non gifted and talented students.
- Schools willingness to identify kids
- Support for teachers
- That each student has individual needs and gifts, and finding ways to integrate these into mathematics

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What challenges do you face in relation to differentiating for twice-exceptional students?

- Staff willing to work with T-E students to further their education and enrich their learning.
- Others' perception that gifted students should not need to be differentiated for as they are 'capable'. If they are gifted, of course they should be able to read, write or interact without problem and if they are unable to do these things, students should be remediated in these rather than extend to enrich and engage them meaningfully.
- Finding engaging and relevant resources.
- Identifying students and catering for their interests in high school
- Trying to provide the extension in their area of strength while simultaneously trying to support them in their area of deficit. Trying to get this balance right. Trying to not let the deficit be the only focus.
- Catering for their areas of strength while supporting their areas of deficit. Ensuring that our identification tools are effective to pick up students who need to be extended - and their less strong areas are not masking their abilities.

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What challenges do you face in relation to differentiating for twice-exceptional students?

- In my line of work, we often only see the students for a few days each term at best, which makes continuity tricky. For the presenters I work with, having them understand how to differentiate within gifted populations for programs is sometimes challenging to achieve.
- Differentiation for the needs of diverse learners
- Conveying to teachers that 2e students have vastly different needs to that of their gifted peers and their gift may mask their disability and their disability may mask their gift. 2e students often present with a spiky cognitive profile and this makes them paradoxical in nature because they can have clusters of phenomenal splinter skills and yet have average processing speed or working memory, meaning that their brain can absorb incredibly complex information, but they absorb it slowly so they can appear as if they are similar to their age peers.
- I am the advocate for 2e learners and teacher understanding, willingness and time are the biggest barriers to enacting differentiation
- The different domains of giftedness and ensuring that we are catering for all the parts including fulfilling the social emotional domain of a Gifted 6 year old. :)
- The students need more understanding and more options for end products.

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What are the opportunities to differentiate for gifted students?

- Mentors, real world connection, application of theory to working model- extend and enrich
- Content, process, product, and environment, flexibility, assessment
- They are so varied. Process, product and content
- At our school, we offer a pull-out program for those students who are performing well academically.
- School offers gifted and talent program supported by ESO 3 days a week
- "I feel that differentiation can be easier than people realise when you work with parents and include students in the process"
- Enrichment, broadening and deepening the curriculum
- Planning within lessons, programs in addition to lessons.
- Academic coaching; Enriching students through community projects
- This varies between cohorts and individual students to reflect interests and support engagement. Ideally, opportunities for community engagement provide meaningful opportunities for these students to flex their maturity, knowledge and build skills they will apply in the real world.
- Our school is just starting the journey.

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What are the opportunities to differentiate for gifted students?

- Targeted focus groups, extra curricular opportunities, acceleration in subject or grade, like minded peer experiences which could include multi age grouping.
- providing quality differentiation in the classroom by the classroom teacher, pull-out programs, extending students within the classroom, extracurricular opportunities.
- To make it default to plan from the top and work downwards. To provide learning experiences that focus both on latitudinal extension as well as longitudinal.
- Consciousness raising about useful models.
- Through the Australian Curriculum, we can use all aspects of the curriculum elements to provide depth and complexity that gifted students need to remain engaged and learning. We can provide enriching experiences that are outside the curriculum but are still interesting, thought provoking and teach valuable cognitive skills without a curriculum link. With robust pre-assessment strategies in place, we can provide alternative learning pathways for aspects of the curriculum that the student already has mastery of - it's about planning ahead and anticipating that some students will already know the upcoming content

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Parent Responses

What challenges do you think teachers may have generally relating to differentiating for intellectually gifted students?

- Time. There are so many forms, meetings, and other requirements for teachers, and particularly heavy expectations around outcomes for lower-end students that students who are capable easily slip down the list.
- Limited time and manpower to give over to proper identification and full investigation of the needs of gifted students in their class. Limited time and resources to devise differentiation strategies for students with diverse needs within a class.

What challenges do you think teachers may have in relation to differentiating for twice-exceptional students?

- Time and expectations around literacy and numeracy benchmarks.
- Difficulties understanding the challenges/barriers which might prevent a 2e student from being able to fully demonstrate their abilities. Limited knowledge of appropriate strategies to address these and how to implement these strategies.

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What are the challenges teachers have with differentiating for gifted learners?

- Time
- Parent expectations
- Knowledge
- School factors
- Classroom management
- Assessment/Reporting

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Where are the opportunities to differentiate for gifted learners?

- Student interests
- General capabilities
- Mentors
- Inquiry learning
- Independent projects
- Authentic learning

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General capabilities
Australian Curriculum: Version 9

- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Digital Literacy
- Ethical Understanding
- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Intercultural Understanding
- Personal and Social Capability

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Ethical understanding V9

Sub-element	Level 1 (Foundation)	Level 2 (Years 1–2)	Level 3 (Years 3–4)	Level 4 (Years 5–6)	Level 5 (Years 7–8)	Level 6 (Years 9–10)
UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL CONCEPTS AND PERSPECTIVES						
Explore ethical concepts	identify examples of ethical concepts such as right and wrong	identify ethical concepts, such as honesty and fairness, and describe actions and behaviours associated with these	identify ethical concepts, such as respect and tolerance, and describe how a situation or context affects actions and behaviour	identify and describe ethical concepts, such as truth and justice, and explain how perspectives may vary according to the situation or context	analyse the similarities and differences between ethical concepts, such as integrity, loyalty and equality, in a range of situations and contexts	evaluate the consistency in meaning of ethical concepts, such as trust, freedom and rights and responsibilities, in a range of situations and contexts
Examine values, rights and responsibilities, and ethical norms	identify examples of values, rights and responsibilities	identify values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations, and explain why they are important	describe how values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations influence responses and decision-making	describe how the relationships between values, rights and responsibilities, and ethical norms influence responses and decisions related to ethical issues	describe the relationship between the role of individual and community values, rights and responsibilities, and ethical norms when responding to ethical issues	describe the importance of values, rights and responsibilities when reaching a position on an ethical issue, and evaluate their role in challenging and defending ethical norms
Recognise influences on ethical behaviour and perspectives	identify examples of how emotions affect behaviour	identify how emotions and behaviour interact, and share examples of when they match and when they do not	explain how emotions can affect behaviour and decision-making in different situations	explain how habits and behaviour shape character and examine how they inform ethical perspectives	explain how different traits such as honesty, trust, courage and selfishness interact with responsibilities or duties to determine ethically appropriate responses	explore and analyse examples of the tensions between conflicting positions on issues of personal, social and global importance

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Family-school partnerships

Teachers and parents/carers:

planning together for differentiation

Workshop activity

Communication – Collaboration – Decision making – Consultation

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