The Queensland Association for Gifted and Talented Children Inc,

EMPOWERING EXCELLENCE: LEADING THE WAY FOR GIFTED STUDENTS

23RD AND 24TH MAY, 2025

BRISBANE CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE

Dr John Munro and Dr Michelle Ronksley-Pavia

Invited Speaker : Dr Janelle Wills

Teachers, Parents and Educational Leaders -
Primary, Secondary, Senior

www.qagtc.com.au

Empowering Excellence: Leading the Way for Gifted Students

Venue: Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Grey Street, South Brisbane

FRIDAY 23rd May 2025

7:30am — **Registration and Sign in**

8:30am — **Welcome to Conference**
Introduction to Dr John Munro
Anthony Stevens

9:00am — ***Session 1: What does gifted learning, in its multiple forms, 'look like' in the classroom?***

The starting point for provision is an understanding about gifted and talented learning looks like in the classroom.

10:30am — **Morning Tea**

11:15am — ***Session 2: What practises are used to identify talented outcomes and the multiple types of gifted learning profiles?***

Once the school has a clear idea of what gifted knowing and learning looks like, it is well placed to make decisions about how it will identify instances of gifted learning and thinking

12:45pm — **Lunch**

1:30pm — ***Session 3: How is educational provision differentiated in the classroom?***

The educational provision a school puts in place to facilitate gifted learning and to optimise the learning outcomes of these students will also be determined by how the school believes they learn.

3:00pm — **Close of day**
Anthony Stevens

QAGTC 2025 State conference Schedule – Saturday 24th May

Empowering Excellence: Leading the Way for Gifted Students

Time	Location		
7:30	Delegate entry from Merivale Street – Registration and sign in outside Plaza 1. 2		
8:30	Welcome - Anthony Stevens and Opening		
9:00	*Keynote*: Dr John Munro - Supporting gifted learning and talent development within and beyond the school		
10:00	*Keynote*: Dr Michelle Ronksley Pavia - Generative Artificial Intelligence-Enhanced Pedagogical Approaches for Gifted Learners		
11:00 – 11:45 - Lunch and Networking			
	Plaza 1	Plaza 2	Plaza 3
11:50 - 12:25	**Dr Janelle Wills** Unlocking Student Potential: Enhancing Engagement Through Critical and Creative Thinking	**Dr John Munro** Keynote discussion with John	
12:30 - 1:15	**Sue Stevens** Parenting your child through the school years	**Carol Barnes** Gifted Learners with Disability (GLD) vs. the latest shiny ideologies	**Barbara Mossman** Lighting the Gifted Fire in the Classroom
1:15 – 1:40 - Tea Break and Networking			
1:45 – 2:25	**Dr Janelle Wills** You Can't Make Me! Self-Determination Theory and Student Motivation.	**Anna Fowler** Identifying twice-exceptional students in the early years of schooling: A case study	**Cara Robinson-Taylor and Anthony Stevens** The VIBE: Supporting gifted students in an inclusive classroom environment
2:30 – 3:10	**Anna Wilson** Understanding Queensland Teachers' Perceptions of Achievement to Empower Excellence Within the Australian Curriculum	**Geraldine Nicholas and Samantha Lind** Tournament of Minds: Challenging a Changing World with the power of Talent Development	**Gail Young** Celebrate Engage: How Gifted students seek out priority question techniques.
3:15 - Conference Close			

Presentation Abstract and Presenter Biography

24th May 2025

Saturday - 9:00

Keynote – Dr John Munro

Supporting gifted learning and talent development within and beyond the school

It has long been recognised that many gifted students do not achieve their full potential in school. This keynote will examine what contemporary research tells us about how to optimise education provision and talent development for gifted students. It will unpack what this means for both school-wide provision and also for the parents and families of gifted children.

Bio: *Dr John Munro is Professor of Educational Psychology and Exceptional Learning atAustralian Catholic University and Principal Research Fellow (Hon) at the University of Melbourne.*

He has worked in the area of gifted education and talent development for the past four decades. He designed, co-ordinated and taught the Master of Education (Gifted Education) at the University of Melbourne from 1995-2016 and the Graduate Certificate in Gifted Education at the Australian Catholic University in 2024-25. He developed an explicit research agenda to investigate gifted learning in the classroom and twice-exceptional learning. The outcomes of this research have been published and reported at international conferences. The research agenda included the supervision of 12 PhD and 4 M Ed studies.

He has worked extensively with schools and education authorities both within Australia and internationally to improve provision for gifted and talented students. In Australia these include school leadership and middle leader and teacher courses through the Bastow Institute, Catholic Education Victoria, Department of Education (Victoria), the South Australian Education Department, and the Centre for Strategic Education, and Broken Bay Diocese, NSW. International consultancies include the Department of Education and Training (Victoria) for professional programs in Saudi Arabia, the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, the Central Collegiate Academy, Birmingham and Kent Leadership & Innovation Centre in UK and a continuing consultancy with The Aga Khan Academies in Africa and Asia.

He was contracted by ACARA to write the initial version of the General Capabilities in Creative and Critical Thinking for the Australian Curriculum and was awarded the AAEGT Award for Eminence in Gifted Education in 2020 and the Australian Council for Educational Leaders Honorary Fellowship Award in 2005 for his contribution to exceptional learning and gifted education.

His approach to gifted learning and talent development and related research has been described in media presentations and podcasts, commissioned reports and papers, chapters in books, articles in refereed journals, commissioned articles in non-refereed journals and invited seminar papers, conference papers and invited keynotes. His most recent book is Leading Improvement for Gifted and Talented Students: High-impact strategies to improve high-level outcomes, published by ACER in 2024.

10:00

Keynote – Dr Michelle Ronksley-Pavia

Generative Artificial Intelligence-Enhanced Pedagogical Approaches for Gifted Learners

This presentation aims to address some of the persistent challenges that educators face in effectively supporting the diverse cognitive profiles of gifted students—requiring deep intellectual engagement as well as supporting twice/multi-exceptionality. Despite significant theoretical advancements, these unique learners often remain inadequately served within traditional education that face challenges in providing appropriate differentiation and personalisation.

An exploration of "Project Zephyr" opens the presentation, providing an original case study illustrating the application of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) as a collaborative partner in gifted education. This research demonstrates how GenAI can be leveraged to co-create immersive "what if" scenarios that can challenge gifted minds through complex, cross-disciplinary exploration. Analysis reveals how seemingly impossible premises, such as human-powered flight, can evolve into sophisticated learning experiences that integrate multiple disciplines—physics, biology, psychology—while developing critical thinking, bias recognition, and analytical reasoning. The case study illustrates the capacity of iterative, collaborative GenAI interactions to address some of the learning characteristics of gifted students, such as requirements for depth, complexity, and imaginative exploration.

The presentation further explores a complementary methodological framework using GenAI for pedagogical rehearsal with twice-/multi-exceptional learners. Through systematic implementation of evidence-informed synthetic profiles, this research demonstrates how educators can experiment with personalised learning approaches before classroom implementation, thereby reducing risk while enhancing pedagogical confidence. The research further demonstrates the viability of GenAI-enhanced pedagogical rehearsal as an empirically-grounded mechanism for developing personalised, strength-based approaches that together respect neurodevelopmental diversity while nurturing potential. Critical implications of these innovative approaches for classroom practice form the conclusion, indicating potential pathways for implementing evidence-informed, strengths-based pedagogical practices that recognise the complex learning profiles of gifted students. This analysis establishes a methodological framework for reconceptualising educational strategies beyond traditional deficit-oriented paradigms.

Bio: *Dr Michelle Ronksley-Pavia is a pioneering researcher in gifted education. Her work is transforming understanding of gifted education and twice-exceptionality and creating innovative pathways for supporting diverse gifted learners. As Senior Lecturer in Special Education and Inclusive Education, and Program Director for the Graduate Certificate in Special Education, Griffith University, she has established herself as an internationally recognised expert on disability, giftedness, and the intersection of these domains—twice-/multi-exceptionality.*

Dr Ronksley-Pavia's research centres the voices of gifted children and twice/multi-exceptional children, addressing critical gaps in understanding their lived experiences. Her pioneering work on prevalence estimates of twice-exceptionality provides essential data previously unavailable to policymakers and educators. Her research on identification methods has challenged inappropriate practices, with her critique of Australia's NAPLAN as the sole approach for identifying giftedness being viewed over 8,400 times and ranking in the top 5% of all research outputs scored by Altmetric.

As a field leader, Dr Ronksley-Pavia has secured prestigious national and international grants, including the Esther Katz Rosen Fund Grant from the American Psychological Foundation—becoming the first Australian researcher ever to receive this honour. Her innovative work exploring generative AI (GenAI) applications in gifted education demonstrates her forward-thinking approach to talent development. Additionally, her Queensland Department of Education Horizon Grant is building teacher capacity to leverage GenAI for neuro-diverse students. Dr Ronksley-Pavia's service to gifted education is exemplary. As an elected Australian Delegate to the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC), she actively contributes to Council initiatives, including serving on the Teacher Education Committee that developed the WCGTC Global Principles for Professional Learning in Gifted Education. She has also established the annual Griffith University Gifted Education Symposium, bringing together international experts, practitioners, and parents/caregivers.

Her international leadership is evidenced by speaker invitations, authorship requests, media consultancy invitations, membership of the Academic Committee for the WCGTC 2025 World Conference, editorial board membership for the Journal of Gifted Education and Creativity, and Australian Correspondent for the European Council for High Ability (ECHA). She was recently honoured as "a prominent, pioneering scholar" through an invited interview in the field-leading journal Roeper Review (2024).

11:50 – 12:25

Invited Speaker - Dr Janelle Wills

Unlocking Student Potential: Enhancing Engagement Through Critical and Creative Thinking

Given the wealth of research available, it is difficult to dispute the importance of teaching thinking skills. Yet, in today's era of accountability, standardized testing, and focus on input and output the teaching of thinking skills often takes a back seat. It is essential now, more than ever, to dedicate time to meaningful conversations, for students to see knowledge as information known so far rather than final and to create opportunities for students to think and wonder, wonder and think. Drawing from Dr Wills' book, "Thinking Protocols for Learning", this session integrates easy-to-use, research-based strategies for teaching critical and creative thinking skills, designing group activities, and nurturing a collaborative classroom environment.

- Learn how to teach various thinking skills, including critical, creative, and ethical thinking linked to Australian Curriculum V.9
- Facilitate strong group dialogue among students
- Embed practical strategies for teaching critical and creative thinking skills into unit planning

Bio: *Dr Janelle Wills, a seasoned educator with over three decades of experience in teaching and leadership, has been instrumental in driving positive change in Australian education at a school and sector level.*

With a PhD that delved into self-efficacy and twice exceptional students, Dr Wills has significantly contributed to various realms of education, including special education, gifted education, assessment, and feedback. Her research has shaped and enriched these areas, shedding light on effective teaching practices and strategies.

Dr John Munro

Followup Keynote Discussion with John

12:30 – 1:15

Sue Stevens

Parenting your child through the school years

School is not a perfect fit for any one child. Your child's school experience may be fraught with frustration, reluctance to attend or to cooperate in a class that doesn't bring them any joy. So what are parents to do in the here and now? It may be better to work toward a mutual understanding of what would be deemed "success" for your particular child. Rather than fighting the system, informed parents may be able to negotiate the school program, and make it fit for their children. This involves a rethinking of what it means to "achieve" at school and to align the success criteria so that real progress can be made more easily. Strategies to negotiate with schools coupled with useful activities and hints for children, resources and examples of success will be shared so that parents will be empowered to take their place as first educators of their children without the need for WWIII with their child's school.

This presentation relies not just on theory but also Sue's personal experience. Making school fit her children's learning needs was a difficult task and ultimately involved acceleration and searching out enrichment programs that were on offer. Thankfully, all three children and both parents survived the school years and the children are now pursuing their dreams.

***Bio**: Sue is a mathematics and science teacher of long standing. She is the mother of three gifted children and has a masters' degree in gifted education, both factors informing her continual promotion of appropriate accommodations for gifted children in schools through the work of QAGTC.*

Sue is a passionate provider of teacher professional development workshops and seminars and co-writer of the Strategies and Indicators document for the implementation of gifted education in state schools and an equivalent document for Brisbane Catholic Education. She also wrote the gifted supplement modules for ACARA and Australian Science Teachers' Association online curriculum support. She is an enthusiastic creator and deliverer of STEM programs for gifted students from prep to Year 9 and a judge of the annual Science Teachers' Association Queensland (STAQ) Science competition. Sue is presently directing her attention to the identification and support of potentially overlooked disenfranchised, yet gifted students.

Carol Barnes

Gifted Learners with Disability (GLD) vs the latest shiny ideologies

Not all intellectually gifted children achieve high grades in a straightforward manner. Some are continually struggling with an unidentified co-occurring disability which may negatively affect their learning, their academic success and their general wellbeing. These children are 'gifted learners with disability' ('GLD'). In this context, 'disability' is defined widely (as in Australian disability discrimination legislation) rather than encompassing only those few disabilities which some education departments have selectively tweezered out for additional funding. Some GLD advocates in Australia are increasingly concerned to see educators gradually and capriciously moving towards a differentiation or UDL position espoused by some overseas academics – the

promotion of a narrower, 'strength-based' approach for GLD, at the expense of remedial intervention designed to address (if possible) the concomitant disability. Similarly, the trend to begin referring to GLD students by euphemisms such as 'twice-exceptional' or 'neuro-divergent' in Australia is harming these students when it comes to applying for disability adjustments for classroom activities and for exams. And the enigmatic ideology of full inclusion, with all its strict rules and requirements, may result in GLD having neither their giftedness nor their disability needs met at school. What would it be safer for educators to do instead?

Bio: *Carol Barnes is an honorary Visiting Fellow (gifted education) at GERRIC within the Education School at the University of NSW. She is national coordinator for GLD Australia, an online learning community focussing on intellectually gifted learners with disability (GLD). She currently consults to government on 12 GLD-related projects, inquiries and reviews. A resident of Queensland, Carol is currently undertaking a Bond University PhD in Law on disability adjustments for GLD children. Carol was the only Australian named on the 2020 Bridges 2e Centre's list of 'movers and shakers' in the GLD field. She has recently been appointed to the Queensland Disability Reform Engagement and Co-design Team which advises government on its Disability Reform Framework.*

Barbara Mossman

Lighting the Gifted Fire in the Classroom

To maximise individual self-realisation and national potential, we clearly need to engage gifted students in Australian schools. To do so, educators need to adopt a multi-pronged approach to catering to our most able. Not only do staff need education about the needs of gifted students and ways to cater to them in the classroom, but targeted opportunities need to be introduced that appeal to such students' need for challenge, ideally beyond extension or acceleration options. Understanding the complex socio-emotional profiles of many gifted students and the breadth of their gifts is key to building a program that unleashes potential and creates a culture of excitement. Recognising this, Cannon Hill Anglican College has embraced a broad definition of giftedness via a range of unique, "home-grown" elective subjects that cater to student passions. These electives include Changing Tomorrow, a collaborative problem-solving elective, and The Project, where students undertake ambitious passion projects, resulting in extraordinary achievements in areas ranging from marine biology research to designing functioning AI to writing fantasy novellas. In addition, students are involved in a school-wide, soft-skills development program that invites them to reflect, not only on their thinking skills, but also on their personalities, communication and collaboration skills.

Bio: *With a reputation as an innovative, soft skills-focused educator of gifted young people who has fostered an aspirational student culture in her school, Barbara Mossman is passionate about the need to challenge students by catering to a broad range of giftedness through both curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. Most notably, in her role as Head of Gifted and Enterprise Education at Cannon Hill Anglican College she has designed innovative electives that facilitate ambitious passion projects and a successful whole-school 21st century skills development program. Barbara has extensive educational leadership experience in leading Queensland schools and a background in the communications industry.*

1:45 – 2:25

Dr Janelle Wills

You Can't Make Me! Self-Determination Theory and Student Motivation

We can't make students be motivated but we can create an environment where students can motivate themselves. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a widely used framework for understanding human motivation and well-being. According to SDT, people have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competency and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the sense of volition and choice in one's actions, competency refers to the sense of mastery and effectiveness in one's skills, and relatedness refers to the sense of connection and belonging with others. When these needs are satisfied, people experience more intrinsic motivation, engagement, learning and achievement. When these needs are hindered, people experience more extrinsic motivation, anxiety, boredom and dropout.

This workshop will introduce the main concepts and principles of SDT and how they apply to our students. It will also provide practical strategies for educators to enhance the autonomy, competency and relatedness of their students in the classroom and beyond. The workshop will cover topics such as:

- How to create a supportive and autonomy-respecting learning environment
- How to use feedback in a way that promotes competency and intrinsic motivation
- How to foster positive relationships and a sense of community among students and teachers

Bio: *Dr Janelle Wills, a seasoned educator with over three decades of experience in teaching and leadership, has been instrumental in driving positive change in Australian education at a school and sector level.*

With a PhD that delved into self-efficacy and twice exceptional students, Dr Wills has significantly contributed to various realms of education, including special education, gifted education, assessment, and feedback. Her research has shaped and enriched these areas, shedding light on effective teaching practices and strategies.

Anna Fowler

Identifying twice-exceptional students in the early years of schooling: A case study

Twice-exceptional learners are often difficult to identify. With a co-occurrence of high potential and disability(ies), these students require specific supports to address their unique and diverse needs. Without accurate identification, twice-exceptional students may not receive appropriate educational programming and provisions, further exacerbating educational difficulties where students remain unable to reach their potential. Findings from this exploratory case study into current early learning identification practices used in one state school in Queensland, will be presented. Data were gathered through document reviews and a two-stage interview design with a single participant, with research focussed on practices taking place in the early years of schooling, Prep and Year 1, to determine their suitability for identifying both exceptions (giftedness and disabilities) for these students. Key findings revealed a local policy initiative to identify gifted learners, a comprehensive assessment approach, a collaborative decision-making approach, and the key roles of the principal and gifted and talented coordinator in driving local

practice. Discussion will take place around these findings, along with recommendations for policy and practice, as well as suggestions for further research.

Bio: *Anna Fowler has over 20 years' experience in Education, including Primary teaching, pre-service teacher education at the University level, tutoring and research. She completed a Masters of Education and Professional Studies Research in 2024, focused on Twice-exceptional identification, and has since gone on to undertake a PhD at Griffith University where she seeks to explore sense of belonging experiences for twice-exceptional learners across schooling years. Anna recently started teaching for Griffith University, after many years of working online for the University of New England, Armidale. Her particular area of passion for twice-exceptional learners combines her personal, teaching and researcher perspectives and experiences.*

Cara Robinson-Taylor and Anthony Stevens

The VIBE: Supporting gifted students in an inclusive classroom environment

This presentation explores the benefits of "Teaching for Thinking" to engage gifted students within an inclusive classroom setting. Attendees will learn about the principles of thinking skills, practical strategies for integrating these skills into the curriculum, and how to create a classroom environment that fosters participation from all students. The session will also review the successful "VIBE" program, highlighting its role in supporting the induction of new learners in secondary school. Join us for an engaging and informative session aimed at enhancing educational practices for gifted students.

Bio: *Cara-Lee Robinson Taylor is an accomplished educator with a wealth of experience in teaching for thinking. Her recent position at San Sisto College has allowed her to hone her expertise in teaching pedagogy, particularly in the areas of English, History, Philosophy, and Psychology. Over the past 8 years, she has been an integral part of the renowned Critical Thinking Project at San Sisto College. Currently, Cara-Lee is engaged in a special collaboration with Brisbane Catholic Education Office, a number of BCE schools and the University of Queensland. Her focus lies on the innovative UQ "Teaching for Thinking" program, which aims to enhance critical and creative thinking skills in schools.*

Her dedication to advancing education and fostering intellectual growth makes her a valuable asset to any conference audience – parents or educators.

Bio: *Anthony is the current State President of QAGTC and has presented at state, national and international gifted conferences. He has also presented many parent programs at gifted activities for QAGTC over the years. Anthony is an accomplished educator with a wealth of experience in leading learning in the secondary education setting. The focus of today's presentation lies on the intersection of sustainable gifted education and the new "Teaching for Thinking" program implemented in schools, which aims to enhance critical and creative thinking skills in schools, providing advice for teachers and parents to assist gifted students.*

2:30 – 3:10

Anna Wilson

Understanding Queensland Teachers' Perceptions of Achievement to Empower Excellence Within the Australian Curriculum

This presentation explores challenges teachers face in defining achievement and effectively supporting gifted students to develop their potential.

The presentation will share findings from a qualitative case study conducted at one Queensland state school. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with seven teachers of gifted students in Years 8 and 9. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is used as the framework to explore how the complex interplay between classroom teachers, gifted students, and their broader context influenced both teacher perceptions of gifted students' achievement and the development of gifted potential. The study revealed five themes: Summative assessment limitations, Curriculum compliance stifling potential, Gifted students as "other" or "separate", Enjoyment and growth as achievement, and Teacher uncertainty.

Findings highlight the significance not only of teacher perceptions of gifted achievement in shaping the classroom learning experiences of gifted students, but also of the importance of systemic factors, including implementation of the Australian Curriculum, in shaping teacher perceptions. Critical insight into how broader educational frameworks interact with school practices underscores the need to address the disconnect between policy and practice and implement strengths-based pedagogical practices to ensure all gifted students have access to appropriately challenging learning opportunities.

Bio: *Anna Wilson is an experienced classroom teacher, twice-exceptional student advocate and education leader dedicated to ensuring educational opportunities for students to realise their potential. Anna has recently completed a Master of Education and Professional Studies Research at Griffith University.*

With extensive experience in classroom and leadership roles in state high schools in Queensland, Victoria and Scotland, and as a Principal Project Officer for the Department of Education Queensland, her passion for gifted education is evident in her commitment to developing and leading best-practice professional development programs that boost teacher confidence in differentiation and yield positive student outcomes.

Geraldine Nicholas and Samantha Lind

Tournament of Minds: Challenging a Changing World with the power of Talent Development

Clubs and competitions offer a significant opportunity to cultivate talent across various disciplines, with a strong focus on fostering creative and critical thinking as well as collaboration outside the classroom. They allow individuals to practice and develop their expertise in a specific domain, advancing their knowledge and skills from a novice level to an expert level within their chosen field. Additionally, these activities contribute to the development of essential social skills and key competencies. What potential exists beyond the classroom for the growth of talent?

Bio: *Geraldine Nicholas is the Professional Learning Coordinator and Co Director for Tournament of Minds (TOM) Victoria where she has an ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of Gifted and Talented. TOM has for 38 years challenged teams of students from all over the world to be collaborative, creative and critical as they meet the requirements of the open ended Challenges. Geraldine has been a passionate advocate of Tournament of Minds for 32 years. As her everyday job, Geraldine is at St Michael's Grammar, St Kilda within the dynamic Learning Services team where she is responsible for the needs of Gifted students.*

Bio: *Samantha Lind is the NSW Director of Tournament of Minds (TOM), the Vice Director of QLD TOM and the Vice CEO for TOM Limited. In her role as a director, Samantha has worked with gifted students for well over 20years. During this time she has upskilled both teachers and students in the use of critical and creative thinking skills to solve complex challenges. Samantha works as an Assistant Principal Curriculum and Instruction, for the NSW Department of Education, and is the network Lead for High Potential and Gifted Education. She leads curriculum development for gifted students, working with hundreds of teachers and students.*

Gail Young

Celebrate Engage: How Gifted students seek out priority question techniques

Young Gifted learners are curious thinkers who like to inquire about their own learning. These students need to generate their own thinking about their learning. The asking of questions by students can be just as important as a teacher asking questions. It is important to create a culture of thinking in positive classroom environment where the teacher steps back and encourages students to take the lead with their own learning. The key idea is to get students thinking for themselves unfettered by worries about whether the teacher likes or dislikes their questions.

In this interactive workshop participants will learn about the shift in teaching when students formulate their own questions. The importance of establishing this powerful tool will allow our young gifted learners to be self-directed learners as they emerge on their own demonstrating their gifts and talents.

Bio: *Gail is an experienced early year's professional teacher who has completed her Masters' degree in Gifted and Talented Education. Gail advocates for connecting with gifted learners by providing a platform in classroom practice whereby gifted students build their question formulation skills. Gail has recently completed a course at Harvard University on the Question Formulation Technique. Gail Is a member of state management team at QAGTC Inc. and has presented at World, International, National, Asia -Pacific and QAGTC state conferences.*

3:15 Conference Closing