



Dealing with Diversity in Education: Gifted Students

Presented to Australasian Parliamentary Educators Conference
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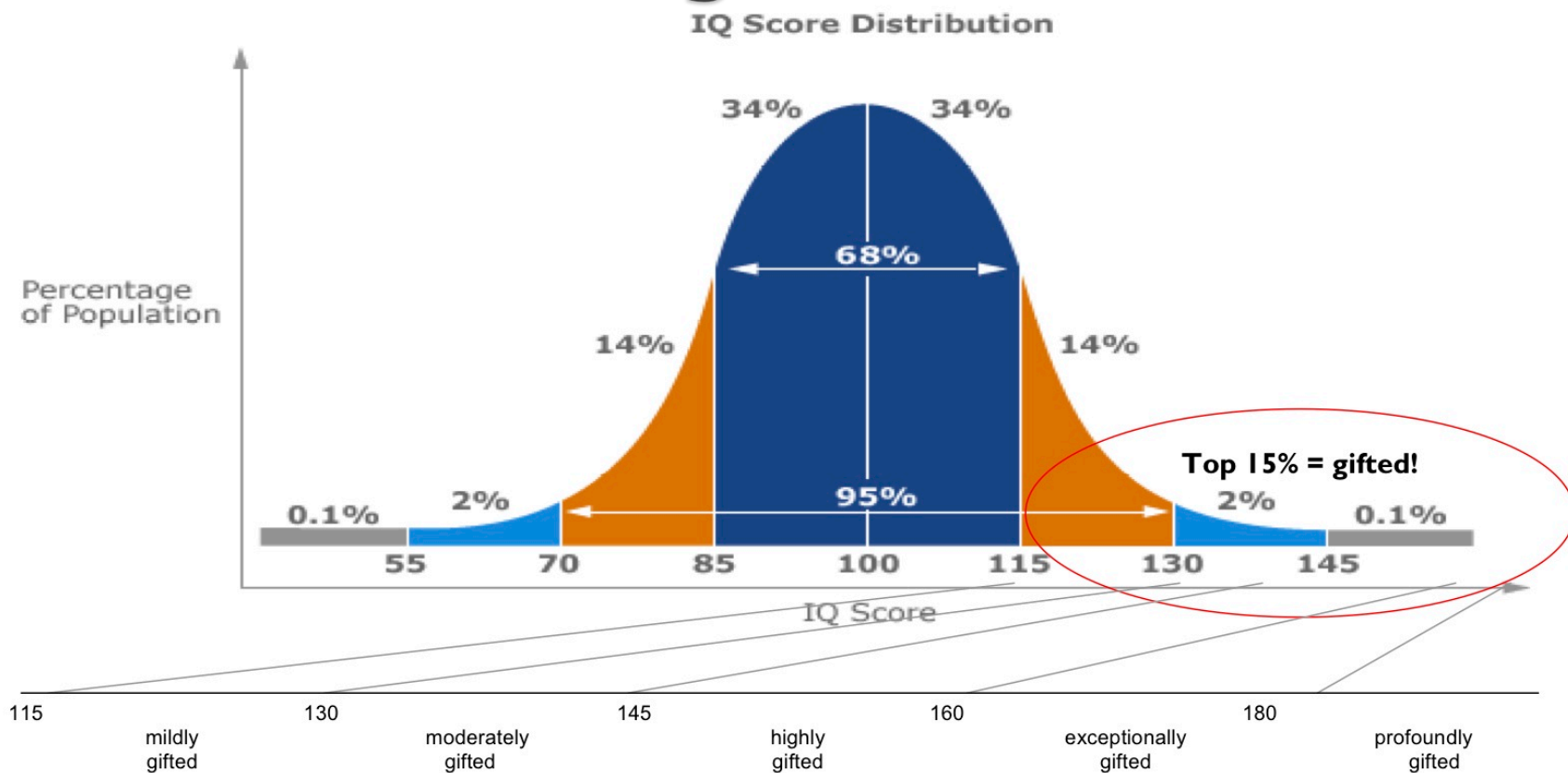
Lynne Maher
Tasmanian Association for the Gifted



- ▶ “There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people.”

Thomas Jefferson

Who are our gifted students?



Students who are gifted have the capacity for advanced development relative to their age peers in at least one ability domain (cognitive, physical, creative or social) to a degree that places them at least among the top 10% of their age peers.

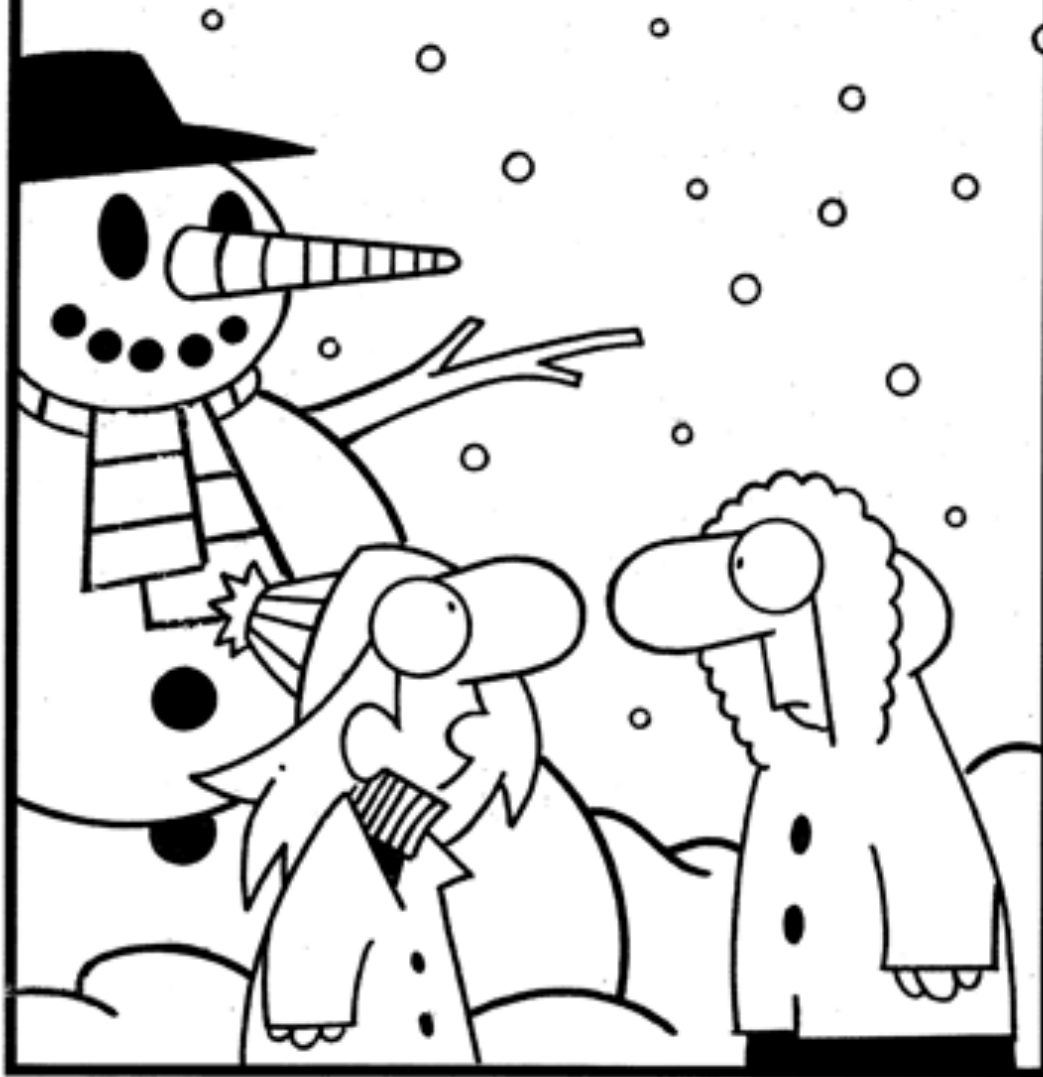
Characteristics of gifted students

Gifted students may:

- ▶ Have excellent language development for their age
- ▶ Have an exceptional memory for facts, people or events
- ▶ Have excellent powers of observation



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“If snow is made from water and water has no calories, how come snowmen are fat?”

- ▶ *Display extreme curiosity and ask complex questions*



Gifted children may:

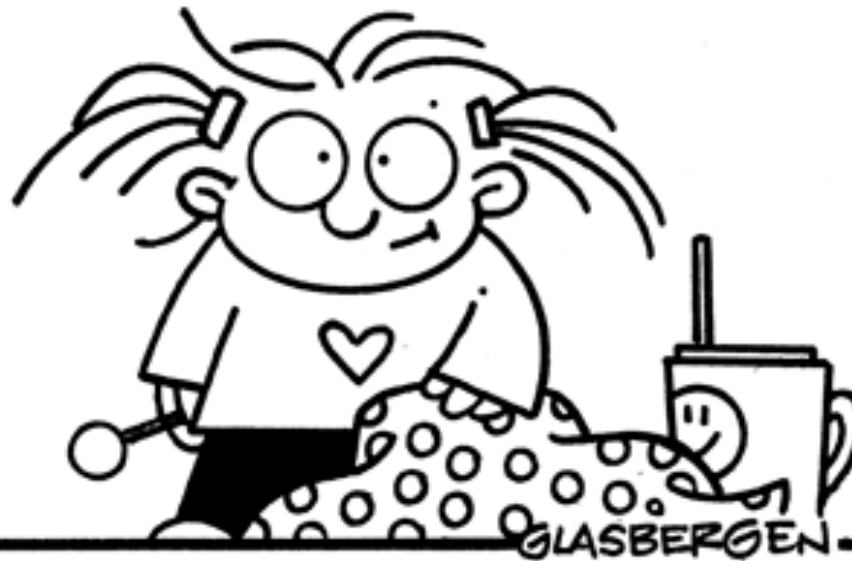
- ▶ Learn quickly and need few repetitions
- ▶ Have an excellent imagination
- ▶ Have a sophisticated sense of humour
- ▶ Be passionate about particular topics
- ▶ Prefer individual work and dislike being part of a group
- ▶ Monopolise discussion



GUINNESS BOOK OF WORLD RECORDS



▶ *Have an incredible thirst for knowledge*



April 17, 2009 – Amelia Ann Ashton asked her mother 53,297,518 questions in 15 minutes.

▶ *Have very good reasoning powers*



"It's a multimedia slide presentation explaining how I can live a happy, healthy and productive life without broccoli."

They may also

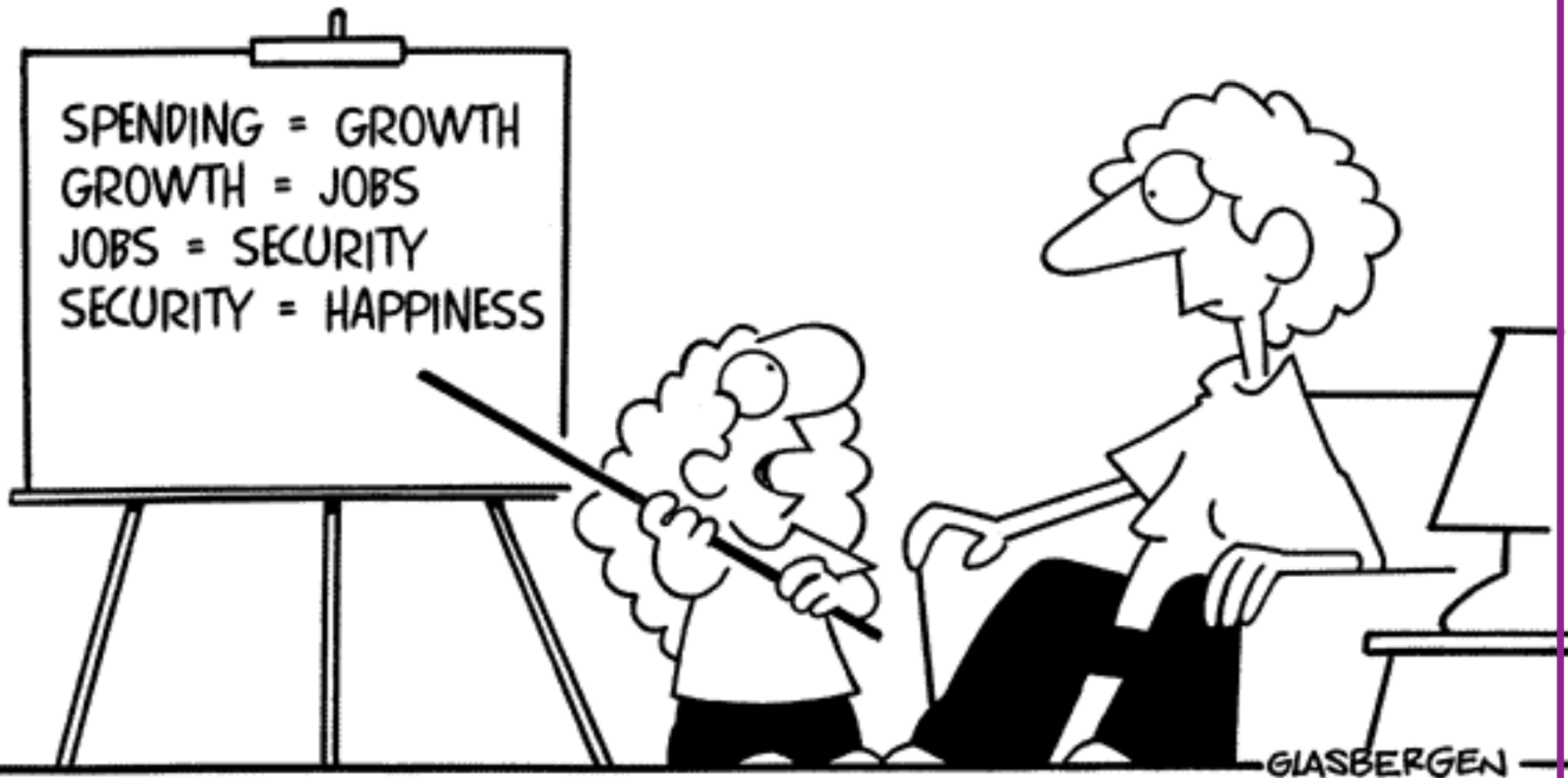
- ▶ Prefer the company of older students or adults and have difficulty relating to their age peers



They may also



- ▶ Be more sensitive, feel things more deeply or intensely than others the same age
- ▶ Exhibit behaviours which result in their being confused with children with ADHD or autism
- ▶ Have a tendency to daydream or ‘switch off’ into their own world.



“...and *that’s* why you need to raise my allowance!”

Use their reasoning powers to argue with you

and they may..

- ▶ Correct others impolitely (including their teachers and you)
- ▶ Get bored easily, disturb others
- ▶ Lack respect for adult arguments
- ▶ Be non-conforming



and they may..

- ▶ Appear inattentive but have answers to your questions
- ▶ Be overly sensitive to criticism
- ▶ Use their sense of humour inappropriately
- ▶ Dumb down to “fit in”



Gifted students are NOT all the same



- ▶ Gifted children may be
 - Gifted across the board
 - Asynchronous in their giftedness and/or development
- ▶ Gifted children may have “something else” going on
 - Twice exceptional: gifted with a learning disability
 - Exhibit overexcitabilities
- ▶ Gifted children may be
 - Highly motivated to achieve
 - Have no intrinsic motivation
- ▶ Gifted children may have
 - Lots of environmental support and stimulation
 - Very little environmental support and stimulation

Ideally instructional strategies for gifted students include:

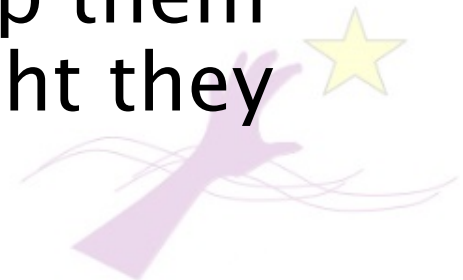
- ▶ Identifying students with high potential
- ▶ Like-ability grouping
- ▶ Accelerated (faster paced) learning
- ▶ Added depth and complexity in learning
- ▶ Supported risk taking
- ▶ Curriculum compacting
- ▶ ...

The opportunity to learn something new every day



Teaching gifted learners well means:

- ▶ Rich learning experiences: those that are organized by key concepts and principles rather than by facts
- ▶ Content that is relevant to their lives
- ▶ Questions / activities that enable them to process important ideas at a high level
- ▶ Learning environments that are respectful to them
- ▶ Learning experiences that help them achieve more than they thought they could.



What you can do:

- ▶ Develop an understanding of gifted students
- ▶ Be prepared to self analyse your beliefs and values about gifted students
- ▶ Be well prepared and focus on concepts rather than facts
- ▶ Structure your questions to be open ended and multifaceted, to provide the opportunity for higher order thinking



You can also:



- ▶ Accept and value the contributions of gifted students who choose to be involved
- ▶ Be prepared for and open minded about unexpected responses
- ▶ Don't feel threatened if they demonstrate knowledge greater than yours. Take questions, to which you have no answer, on notice.