



Cambridge Assessment
International Education

Understanding exceptionally able students in your classroom

Cambridge Assessment International Education
Conference

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In this breakout session we will...

- ▶ Explore ways of thinking about exceptional ability
- ▶ Consider the complexity of learners' experiences in the classroom
- ▶ Define dual exceptionality
- ▶ Share some strategies for good practice

Why are you here today?



**How is exceptional ability
defined in your school
context?**

Top 10%?

“Giftedness”?

IQ above
130?

Talent?

Current
performance?

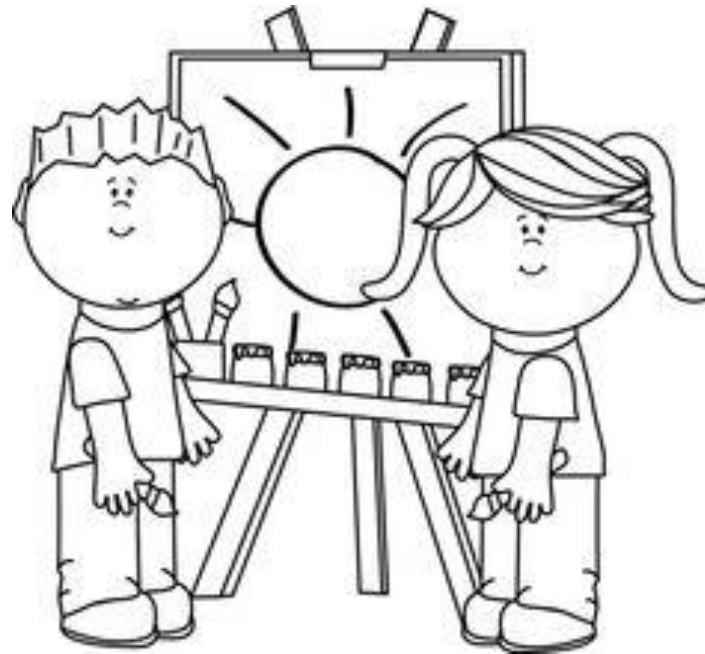
Academic
subjects?

Creativity?

Special
educational
need?

Future
potential?

How easy or difficult is it to identify highly able learners in your context?



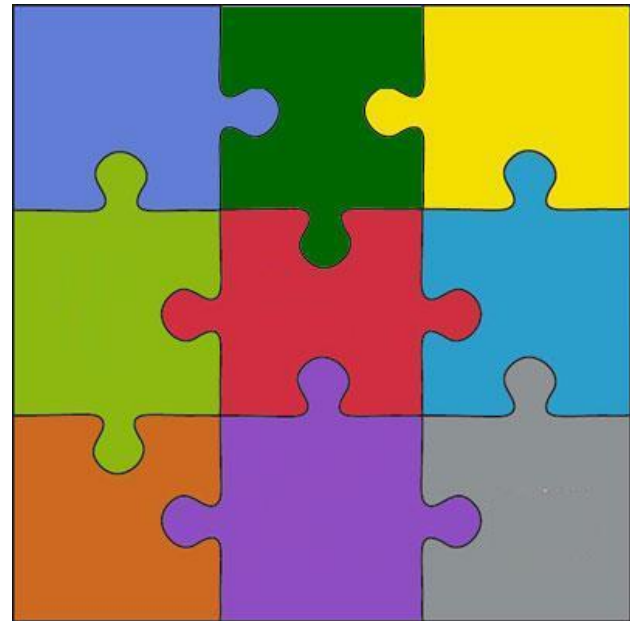
“Innately gifted”? or “Skilled up”?

Claxton & Meadows (2008)

Why might some able students be “hidden”?

- ▶ Different cultural background
- ▶ Personality
- ▶ Motivation
- ▶ Additional learning needs
- ▶ Poverty/isolation
- ▶ Behaviour problems
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Cultural & social capital

- ▶ These factors are inter-linked...



Dual exceptionality

- ▶ Describes learners who are intellectually very able or talented and who also have additional learning needs e.g.
 - ▶ Dyslexia
 - ▶ Autistic Spectrum Disorders
 - ▶ Developmental Coordination Disorder
 - ▶ Developmental Language Disorder
 - ▶ Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
 - ▶ Physical and sensory differences;
- ▶ High frequency of co-occurrence of handwriting difficulties
 - ▶ Perceived gap between potential and performance

Montgomery (2015); Silverman (2002)

Recognised by others
Sought out, seen as a resource, shows how, helps, attracts others (as magnet), responsive, admired

Engages
Initiates, directs/leads, attracts, encourages, shows how, offers or extends instruction/help

Moving & doing
Demonstrates, constructs, looks/reacts, shows how or what, exhibits, non-verbal expressive

Vocabulary
Fluent, comprehends, express/ expressive, novel, associates/ connects, complex syntax, uses 'BIG' words

Knows
Comprehends/reasons, connects/associates, finds/ applies/uses, answers/ announces, explains, calculates/solves

Shares/Volunteers
Extends (to others), illustrates, connects/describes, explains/ instructs, helps/shows how, advises, encourages

Explores
Experiments, pretends, builds, designs, constructs, organises/sorts, solves, plays

Comet
Unexpected, extraordinary, extra-special, difficult to classify

Observant
Notices, sees relation, connects/ associates/predicts, examines, distinguishes, determines (sees) difference (change)

Focus
Absorbed, diligent, concentrates, organised/sorts, insight, completes details

Humour
Jokes, clever, original, notices/creates, spontaneous, reacts/responds

Independent
Works alone, self-directed, initiates, absorbed, diligent, concentrates, plans/pursues/ solves

Sensitive
Expressive/quick to tear, insightful, thoughtful, helpful, sympathetic/empathetic, anxious, self-aware, concern/ care

Sees big picture
Recognises pattern, comprehends, associates, finds metaphor, predicts, analyses/theorises

Act hunger
Expressive, role play, show, exhibit, gesture, spontaneous, lead, announce, enthusiastic

Fantasy/Imagination
Invents, imitates, imagines, pretends, original construction, novel design

Imagery
(Uses) metaphors, detects symbolism, illustrates, artistic, clever, novel, original, expressive

Curious/Questions
Notices, examines, observes, seeks/asks, requests, has insight/ connects

Name
[]

Date
[]

- ▶ Identifying learners as able and talented presents challenges that are
 - ▶ Practical
 - ▶ Pedagogical
 - ▶ Moral (?)

**What has been your
experience of teaching a
highly able student?**

Challenges?

Rewards?

Three models of curriculum differentiation...

Differentiation by	The setting of common tasks...
Inputs	...at different levels of difficulty suitable for different levels of achievement
Outputs	...that can be responded to in a positive way by all students but assessed differently
Development	...to which all students can contribute their own inputs, progressing from surface to deep learning and thus be enabled to achieve more advanced learning outcome

Montgomery (1996)

Enrichment activities for able learners should...

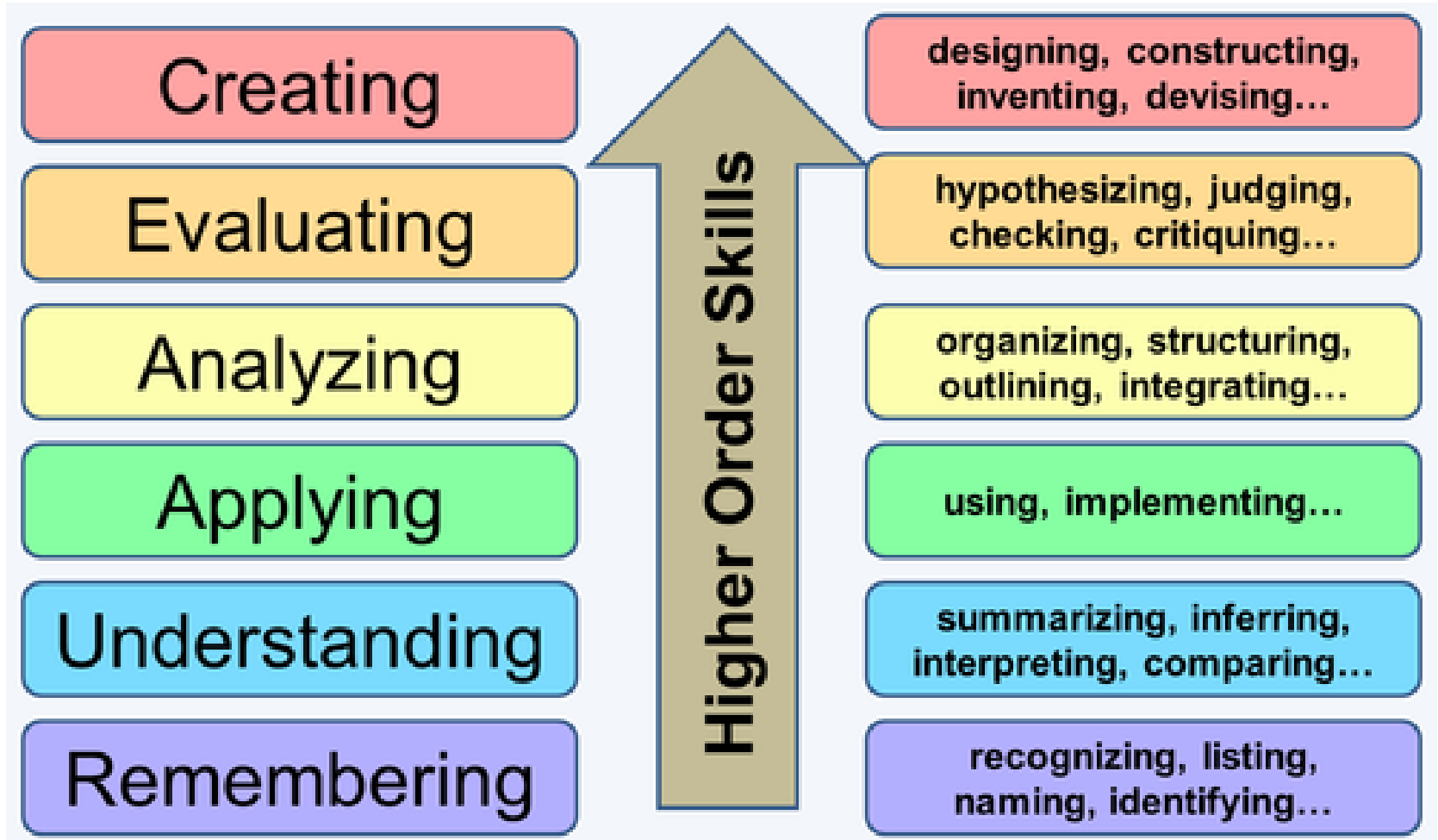
- ▶ Be beneficial to the development and use of **higher order thinking abilities**
- ▶ Provide the possibility to **explore new knowledge** and information
- ▶ Encourage students to select and use **varied sources of information**
- ▶ Aim to promote complex, enriching and **in-depth study of important ideas**, problems and subjects, **integrating knowledge** between and within subject areas
- ▶ Offer opportunity to move to increasingly **autonomous learning** activities

But why restrict this only to learners identified as exceptionally able?

One quick example...

The power of good questions

Bloom's Taxonomy



Wait time 1 & Wait time 2

- ▶ Research indicates 2 key places where pauses greatly increase quality of responses:
 - ▶ WT1 – immediately after you ask a question
 - ▶ WT2 – immediately after pupil responds
- ▶ Pupils
 - ▶ Give longer & more complex answers
 - ▶ Support answers with evidence
 - ▶ Speculate more often
 - ▶ Ask more questions
 - ▶ Talk more to other pupils & “piggyback”.
- ▶ Teachers’ questions increase in complexity and require more critical analysis.

Asking questions → making meaning

As teacher you can:

- ▶ Model questioning as a way to make active links between old and new information instead of a display of “weakness” for not knowing something
- ▶ Get pupils to devise their own questions based on Bloom’s Taxonomy
- ▶ Promote pair-problem solving conversations
 - ▶ One learner works to solve the problem; the other tries to really understand their thinking and ask questions to help the solution process – acting as an external “self-regulator”.
- ▶ Skip to the end of the textbook chapter!

To support able students we must remember



- ▶ **All** learners have strengths to build on and improve
- ▶ The development of abilities and talents can be **uneven** and is **changing constantly**
- ▶ Great provision offers a **broad range of experiences** to encourage all learners
- ▶ **Teachers are crucial** in developing learners abilities and talents

“

We can coach everyone in the generic skills of learning...Everyone can be coached in how to persist more in the face of difficulty; how to make more use of their imagination and ideas; how to learn more productively alongside others...how to look at a situation through other people's eyes; how to choose the right kind of challenge for them and move on positively from it.

Claxton & Meadows (2008)

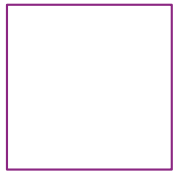
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“

While we challenge and excite the obvious high performers, we should also be mindful that there are others whom we have yet to intrigue, who might surprise us if we can engage them

Belle Wallace (2000)

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Any questions?

THANK YOU

