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A Global Commitment to Gifted Education in the Age of Intelligent Innovation.

December Editorial 2025

Jennie Quinn & Penina Kiss

The recent **World Giftedness Conference** provided an important forum for educators, researchers, and policymakers to consider how gifted education can evolve amid rapid advances in artificial intelligence. Hosted by Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation for Medical and Educational Sciences, the event brought together over 5,000 participants from 75 countries, offering a diverse platform for examining how best to identify and nurture talent in a shifting global landscape.

Four internationally recognised keynote speakers anchored the program with research-informed perspectives. Steven Pfeiffer explored mental health and well-being through the lens of “strengths of the heart.” Denise Fleith discussed the cultural dimensions of creativity and offered recommendations for responsibly integrating technology into teaching. Shelagh Gallagher presented a rationale for creative expertise and practical methods for cultivating it in gifted learners. Tracy Cross shared insights from four decades of research into the psychological, social, and emotional experiences of gifted students.

These perspectives were complemented by presentations from thirteen additional international experts covering AI-enabled curriculum design, neuroscience in talent development, and cross-national policy analyses. This breadth ensured that discussions addressed both emerging technologies and the longstanding pedagogical foundations essential to gifted education.

Across four days, a recurring theme emerged: technology can support but not replace the human elements of gifted education.

Presenters explored how AI might streamline data analysis, personalise learning pathways, and enhance the adaptability of educational environments. A prevailing sentiment was one of cautious optimism - technology offers significant potential, but its impact depends on ethical, informed, and pedagogically sound implementation.

The conference also underscored the centrality of professional learning. As educational systems confront diverse student needs and rapid technological change, teachers need ongoing access to research and international collaboration. Such sustained professional development enables educators to experiment with innovative practices and engage meaningfully with global scholarship.

The World Giftedness Center-Conference highlighted the value of bringing diverse global expertise together, fostering open, evidence-informed exchange that helps education systems navigate emerging opportunities and complexities. As gifted education continues to evolve, such collaborative spaces will remain essential to maintaining balance between technology and humanity, innovation and continuity, aspiration and responsibility.

We are delighted to bring you three new articles to complete the 2025 cycle of the WTW newsletter. Tina Moshkanbaryans brings us an article on recognising and nurturing giftedness beyond the classroom, Merve Irem Ercan helps us identify misconceptions about giftedness in ourselves and others, and Dr Sayed Salah Alawi Salman shares the leadership traits of gifted and talented students.

As the year draws to a close, we thank you for your continued support of the WTW newsletter and wish you a restful and enjoyable holiday season ahead. We look forward to bringing you more from our talented authors in 2026.

Jennie & Penina



Recognising and Nurturing Giftedness Beyond the Classroom: Supporting Students with Physical and Creative and Social Talents

Tina Moshkanbaryans

Head of Diverse Learning | Knox Grammar School

When we think of gifted students, our minds often drift to those with high academic potential - the maths whizzes, the literary standouts, the students who ace every exam. But as we know, giftedness is far more nuanced and multifaceted. Among our school populations are students whose strengths shine not in written assessments but in movement, imagination, leadership, and empathy.

Too often, the potential of these students is under-recognised within traditional school structures. In a climate where education systems are increasingly focused on measurable academic outcomes (Prior, Goldstein & Leckie, 2020), schools must ensure they are also identifying and nurturing non-academic giftedness, and consider what opportunity looks like for the student who choreographs dances, who leads playground negotiations, or who exhibits exceptional skill in physical performance.

This article explores how Sydney's Knox Grammar School has reframed its understanding of giftedness and built inclusive pathways to support all students to flourish.

Broadening Our Definition of Giftedness

According to Gagné's (2020) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent, giftedness refers to natural abilities in any domain - intellectual, creative, social, physical, or perceptual. Talent develops when these abilities are systematically nurtured through opportunities, effort, and targeted support (Gagné, 2004). This definition moves beyond IQ scores and standardised tests, and recognises the diverse ways that human potential is expressed.

Giftedness may show up as agility, coordination, originality, emotional perceptiveness, or persuasive skills and these abilities require as much cultivation as traditional academic strengths. It has long been suggested that when such abilities are neglected, it can result in disengagement in the school setting (Wilson, 1955).

Physical Giftedness: More Than Just Sport

The Pathways for Elite Athletes at Knox (PEAK) program exemplifies Gagné's (2004) vision of talent development, providing a tailored environment for athletes whose natural abilities may lead to elite sporting pathways, or those who are already on a professional sporting pathway. In line with recommendations by Faber et al (2022), PEAK students receive an Individual Performance Plan (IPP) that balances sport-specific development with academic support, goal setting, and holistic growth through the Knox Total Fitness Model (2022).

Just as Abbott and Collins (2004) emphasise the need for psychological, social, and physical development in young people, PEAK students receive one-on-one mentoring with elite athletes and access to workshops and keynotes that develop not just their physical capabilities but their mindset, resilience, and leadership.

There is widespread misunderstanding that physical giftedness manifests in outstanding movement-based performance, however, such talents can also manifest as physical inventiveness a student who learns routines quickly, adapts movement instinctively, or creates new ways to solve physical challenges, yet these skills are often undervalued in schools (Jung, 2022).

Beyond competition-based programs, Knox's offering allows students to engage in physically and mentally challenging experiences through Cadets, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Outdoor Education program. These diverse contexts allow students to explore and refine their kinaesthetic strengths, express creativity through movement, and develop resilience and problem-solving through real-world physical tasks. As Bailey et al. (2009) argue, high-quality physical education and diverse movement-based experiences can significantly enhance not only motor competence but also personal and social development.

Creative Giftedness: Valuing the Arts as Core Learning

Renzulli's (1978) Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness highlights creativity as an essential component, alongside above average ability and task commitment, of gifted behaviours. Creative giftedness is characterised by originality, divergent thinking and the capacity for imaginative expression (Zenasni et al, 2016). At Knox Grammar School, students with advanced creative potential in both visual and creative arts are provided with diverse avenues to explore and refine their talents.

The Knox Academy of Performing Arts (KAPA) nurtures musical, dramatic, dance, and visual arts talent through curated, audition-based opportunities that extend beyond the classroom. Advanced ensembles such as the Symphonic Wind Ensemble and Gallery Choir challenge high-level performers (AMEB Grade 7–8+), reflecting Winner, Goldstein, and Vincent-Lancrin's (2013) emphasis on authentic creative engagement as a pathway to talent realisation.

Exceptionally gifted performers, dancers, and actors are paired with industry mentors in an apprenticeship model that echoes Hetland et al.'s (2013) findings on the importance of sustained relationships with expert practitioners. Gifted visual artists and designers engage in enrichment workshops with professional artists, curators, and gallery owners, fostering both technical growth and critical engagement with artistic practice.

Opportunities extend across diverse disciplines, including photography, ceramics, and the Young Curators program, which cultivates analytical and interpretive skills.

Collaboration is central to KAPA's vision. Students participate in ensembles, individual lessons, the annual Musical, Pipes and Drums, Drama Club, Theatre Sports, and backstage leadership roles through the Tech Crew and TAS Club. Collectively, these programs provide advanced skill development while creating platforms for creative risk-taking, innovation, and artistic excellence.

Social Giftedness: The Overlooked Strength

The need to nurture social development of all students is highlighted through Knox's Total Fitness Model (2022), whereby Social-Emotional Fitness is one of the four key pillars. Within this pillar are the constructs of emotional intelligence, self-concept, positive affect, optimism and relationships, highlighting the School's commitment to every student's holistic development.

The social and emotional needs of gifted students are often an afterthought to the identification of intellectual giftedness (Zeidner & Matthews, 2017), however, Kihlstrom and Cantor (2011) emphasise the significance of supporting students in this domain. Socially gifted students exhibit perceptiveness, social ease, leadership, tact, and interpersonal influence (Gagné, 2020). These students are intuitive about others' needs, skilled in negotiation, and capable of uniting peers around a common goal.

At Knox, students with strengths in persuasion, empathy, negotiation, and public communication are offered diverse opportunities to refine and extend these skills through platforms such as debating, public speaking, mock trials, mooting, and the Toastmasters program. These experiences nurture advanced interpersonal, intrapersonal and communication abilities, and all involve components of self-assessment and self-reflection as a tool for students to remain both highly engaged and self-regulated in all aspects of their learning (Smith, 2017).

Conclusion: Unlocking Every Talent

Recognising giftedness in all its forms challenges schools to look beyond exam results and celebrate the diverse strengths that make up the fabric of a learning community. At Knox Grammar School, the deliberate cultivation of physical, creative, and social talents alongside academic potential reflects a holistic commitment to student growth. By valuing the dancer as much as the mathematician, the empathetic leader as much as the scholar, and the inventive athlete as much as the writer, we affirm that giftedness is multidimensional. When schools create pathways for every kind of talent to flourish, they not only unlock individual potential but also cultivate resilient, compassionate, and innovative young people equipped to contribute meaningfully to the world.

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The RATIMAG: A Quick Way to Identify Misconceptions About Giftedness - In Yourself and Others

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Misconceptions about giftedness are surprisingly persistent even among educators who work closely with gifted learners. Many still believe that gifted students always excel, that they thrive without special support, or that a single IQ score can fully capture giftedness. Such assumptions can unintentionally limit opportunities for gifted individuals. To address these issues, my colleague Albert Ziegler and I developed the Rapid

Assessment Test of Individual Misconceptions About Giftedness (RATIMAG) a brief, validated instrument that helps users identify what they (and others) really believe about giftedness.

The 20-item scale covers three key domains:

- Characteristics and needs of gifted individuals (e.g., heterogeneity and developmental nature of giftedness).
- Assessment and achievement.
- Personality and social-emotional aspects of development.

Results from large educator samples reveal intriguing patterns. University lecturers tend to hold the most accurate conceptions of giftedness, while preservice teachers show greater awareness of social-emotional needs. Long-term professional training (> 5 years) is linked to more nuanced beliefs, particularly regarding gifted learners' developmental pathways. Interestingly, gender differences were absent.

The RATIMAG is available in English and Turkish. The complete set of RATIMAG items is published in Ercan & Ziegler (2025b). Educators and researchers can use the scale in teacher training or professional development to pinpoint which ideas about giftedness still rely on outdated assumptions. By making such beliefs visible, RATIMAG encourages reflection and supports the design of learning environments that genuinely meet gifted learners' diverse needs.

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The Leadership Traits of the Gifted and Talented Students

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Gifted and talented students exhibit various behavioral characteristics and personal traits that distinguish them from their non-gifted peers. Extensive research, including Davis (1992), Mackinnon (1961), Oches (1990), and Rothenberg (1999), has studied traits related to personality, motivation, socialization, and cognitive patterns of gifted individuals (as cited in Silverman, 1993). According to Hallahan and Kauffman (1991), gifted and talented students display a range of socio-emotional traits, such as being more open to the community, more engaged and sensitive to social issues, more dedicated to their tasks, more empathetic toward others' feelings, and more appreciative of the world around them.

Leadership skills are among the social traits of gifted and talented students. According to Karne and Stephens (1999), gifted students are believed to have the potential to become outstanding leaders because of their leadership abilities and their capacity to motivate and guide peers. Some definitions of gifted and talented include demonstrating high abilities in leadership as a key component. In this context, Roberts (2004) states that leadership was listed as a category of giftedness in the Maryland Report (1972), the first national report on gifted education, and in "National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talents" (1993), the second and only other national report on gifted children, with several states in America also including leadership in their definitions of gifted and talented children.

According to Clark & Clark (1994), leadership is an observable activity or set of activities that occurs within a group, organization, or institution, involving a leader and followers who willingly commit to shared goals and work together to achieve them (p.19). In Bakar, Ishak, & Abidin (2014), leadership is defined as a broad competency comprising two elements: how one manages oneself (building self-confidence, self-control, and developing responsible behaviors) and how one manages others (conflict management, being a change catalyst, team capabilities, effective communication, etc.).

There exist numerous parallels between the attributes that define an effective leader and those that delineate a gifted individual. Karnes and Bean (1990) posited that certain characteristics inherent in gifted youth facilitate their advancement in leadership development, specifically, the aspiration to encounter challenges, the capacity for creative problem-solving, the proficiency in critical reasoning, the ability to discern novel relationships, the skill of verbal articulation, adaptability in thought and action, the capability to endure ambiguity, and the talent for motivating others.

Effective leaders and gifted students exhibit high levels of verbal proficiency, social awareness, visionary thinking, adept problem-solving skills, critical analytical abilities, creativity, initiative, accountability, and flexibility (Karnes and Bean, 1996). Renzulli et al. (2002) delineated leadership characteristics among gifted students within the Scales for Rating Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS), encompassing the following attributes:

- Responsible behavior can be counted on to follow through on activities/projects.
- A tendency to be respected by classmates.
- The ability to articulate ideas and communicate well with others.
- Self-confidence when interacting with peers of age.
- The ability to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations.
- Cooperative behavior when working with others.
- A tendency to direct an activity when he or she is involved with others.

Gifted students who exhibit notable leadership qualities necessitate access to a diverse array of educational opportunities that are specifically designed to aid in the development of these essential skills, which will subsequently enable them to effectively leverage these competencies in their future professional endeavors. This need is supported by findings from the World Economic Forum's 2025 report on the future of jobs, which identifies leadership and social influence as increasingly important skills in the modern workforce (as cited in Leopold et al., 2025).

Consequently, Demier (2022) underscores the critical significance of meticulously organizing comprehensive training programs aimed at enhancing the leadership capabilities of students who possess exceptional talents. In alignment with this notion, Phillips (2009) posits that there ought to be a multitude of opportunities dedicated to leadership development that permeate the entire K–12 educational spectrum, with particular emphasis placed on programs tailored specifically for gifted students.

Furthermore, Ogurlu and Sevim (2017), through qualitative interviews with gifted middle school students, found that while many were hesitant to pursue future leadership roles due to factors such as low self-confidence and aversion to responsibility, the majority believed leadership skills could be developed through structured training, expressed interest in such programs, and suggested strategies like collaborative teamwork and targeted student responsibilities to foster leadership in schools.

The preceding discussion underscores that gifted and talented students possess a constellation of traits and characteristics, among them advanced leadership abilities that set them apart from their average-achieving peers. These distinctive attributes not only position them as potential leaders but also highlight their need for purposeful cultivation of such capacities.

To fully realize this potential, these students require access to well-designed, professionally guided opportunities and specialized programs that nurture and refine their leadership competencies, enabling them to translate their abilities into meaningful contributions within their schools, communities, and future professional contexts.

Demier's (2022) study on a leadership skills development program for gifted children highlights the transformative impact such initiatives can have on multiple dimensions of a student's personal and social growth. The findings indicate that participation in structured leadership education not only strengthens core leadership competencies but also enhances students' problem-solving abilities, nurtures their talents, fosters effective teamwork, and cultivates a strong sense of responsibility toward community service. These outcomes underscore the pivotal role the educational system can play in investing in and intentionally cultivating the leadership potential of gifted learners.

By providing a broad spectrum of targeted opportunities, specialized projects, and supportive learning environments, educators can help these students integrate their advanced cognitive abilities with refined leadership skills. This synergy enables them to reach exceptional levels of achievement and to position themselves as influential contributors in their future academic, professional, and societal roles.

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Articles could take the shape of an interview with a specialist in the field, a report on research or a recent event, a book or resource review etc. The guidelines for the article are listed below.

Please submit your article to the following email: WorldTalentWeb@ha.ae

Guidelines for submitting an article for the WorldTalentWeb newsletter:

1. A submitted article should be between 800 to 2000 words, not including references.
2. WorldTalentWeb newsletter caters to the international community and thus, all articles should be written in English.
3. American or British spelling is accepted.
4. All non-native English speakers should make sure to check their articles for language accuracy before submitting them.
5. The article should be in Times New Roman font, size 12 pt.
6. Authors should avoid using footnotes.
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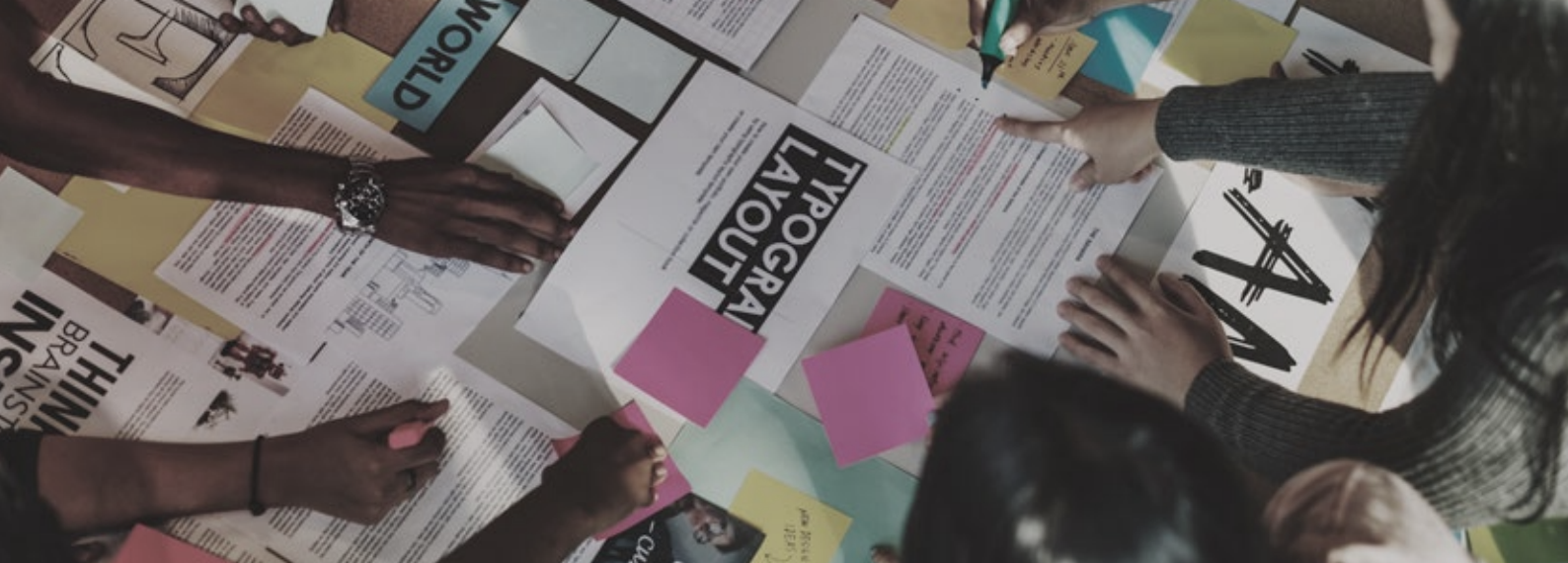
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