

# Gifted *and* Learning Disabled

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A guide to the baffling, paradoxical state of Gifted/LD (bright students who don't 'do well' in school) ... and what we can do for them.

A handbook for students who are Gifted/LD, their parents, siblings, teachers, principals, tutors, gifted & special needs educators, school board personnel, and other friends and supporters.

by

Corinne Bees

Prepared under the auspices of the  
Advocacy Group for Gifted/LD  
Vancouver, BC

*This handbook is dedicated  
to two former GOLD students:*

*Cameron Loa*

*and*

*James Blake*

Gifted *and*  
Learning Disabled:

How can that be?

It can be, and it is.

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Key points:

The giftedness  
may mask  
the learning disability.

And the learning disability  
may mask  
the giftedness.



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### ***About the author***

Corinne Bees, recently retired, was a special education teacher who designed and taught a program called the "GOLD" Program. The program, at Prince of Wales Secondary School in Vancouver, B.C., is for students who are Gifted and Learning Disabled (Gifted/LD). She was rewarded greatly by working for 15 years in this program. During this time she saw many students find a niche—be it in electronics, drama or writing—and, with the support of the GOLD Program and the GOLD room as their haven, these students managed to successfully complete high school.

"She could not know where she would find the GOLD or what form it might take."

-- *An observer*

Corinne also saw students become terribly discouraged and drop out of school only to try again later. She saw teachers who changed dramatically—at first thinking of adaptations such as extra time or use of computers as a "favour", and then later recognizing that many GOLD students were the stars in their class and could achieve first class marks when given adaptations such as a computer or extra time.

The goal of the GOLD Program is to provide enrichment and support, and to encourage the school to provide enough flexibility so students who are Gifted/LD will stay in school and be successful. This program is described in Appendix (iii).

Corinne's work with students who were Gifted/LD, with teachers, and with parents has provided her with invaluable insight into the Gifted/LD phenomenon.

## *Foreword*

This handbook is for people who are interested in understanding and supporting those who are gifted and also have learning disabilities (Gifted/LD) be they children, youth, or adults.

Parents, in particular, will benefit from an increased understanding of their children and how to navigate their child's voyage through the school system.

The handbook has been prepared under the auspices of the Advocacy Group for Gifted/LD in Vancouver, BC. This group consists of parents, professionals, and GOLD alumni. Thanks are extended to parent Susan Ferguson, and in particular parent Margo Catamo who is responsible for the formatting, and to teacher Chris Bromige (GOLD Program), Natasha McCartney, who did the proofreading, and to the Vancouver School Board for printing this handbook. Margo Catamo deserves a second round of applause for her help on this second edition.



Although students who are Gifted/LD do not always welcome the label, this descriptive term can be used as a tool to understand and provide appropriate intervention. Opening one's mind to this term as a description of a learning style, rather than a condemnation, is preferable to leaving a student without the necessary emotional and curricular support to enable them to have a successful school career. The designation can also be a key to funding.

The information in this handbook is gained from research and from personal experience teaching adolescents who are Gifted/LD.

Times will change and some of the information in this handbook will become outdated, but too many children who are Gifted/LD continue to have a difficult time at school. Increased understanding of this wonderful, talented group is essential.



## Part 1

### What is Gifted/LD?

#### 1. Definitions of Gifted/LD

For more than 20 years, educators and researchers have been interested and puzzled by students who are Gifted and Learning Disabled. A definition is hard to find. Following are several descriptions of these twice exceptional, asynchronous, and paradoxical learners:

- A child who is Gifted/LD is "simply one who exhibits great talent or strength in certain areas and disabling weaknesses in others" (Baum 1989).
- "Gifted/LD students are students of superior intellectual ability who exhibit a significant discrepancy between this potential and their level of performance in a particular academic area such as reading, mathematics, spelling, or written expression. Their academic performance is substantially below what would be expected based on their general intellectual ability. As with other children exhibiting learning disabilities, this discrepancy is not due to the lack of educational opportunity in that academic area or other health impairment". (Brody & Mills 1997)
- Seeking evidence of a discrepancy between ability and achievement is particularly important for identifying students who are academically talented and learning disabled. (Brody & Mills 1997)
- It is important to keep in mind when looking at definitions of Gifted/LD that this is a unique and *heterogeneous* group. Each student has a

I remember before I entered school, when everyone thought I was extremely intelligent. How pleasant it was to be appreciated for my gifts, rather than have them overshadowed by my disabilities, as it was from the very start of school.

In this institution called 'school', you are judged on what is put on paper, not what is in your head.

— Joe Bolton, former GOLD student, written when he was in Grade 9.

different version of this condition. This elusive quality often leads to students "falling off the radar".

- Gifted/special needs children develop in an even more extremely uneven manner. They are more complex and intense than their gifted age-mates, and no single grade-level curriculum will meet their needs. (Singer 2000)
- They are qualitatively and quantitatively different from each other on tasks assessing a range of intelligent behaviour. As well, their level of intelligence, among other factors, may influence their emotional and behavioural responses to persistent failure, parent and teacher expectations and, most importantly, remediation.
- The child's giftedness and learning disabilities may both lie in related academic areas - or they may not. Students who are Gifted/LD often do not get referred unless they exhibit a behaviour problem". (Lyon 1989).
- Identification is a significant problem for this population.

## 2. Where to look for students who are Gifted/LD

### Early Identification and Prevention

It is very important to know where to look for students who are Gifted/LD. The sooner you identify this child, the sooner you can prevent some of the trauma. *A negative emotional response in students who are Gifted/LD is almost certain once school starts.* This will result in depression, anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, or disruptive behaviour. Prevention is critical. The dissonance between the student's ability and his or her achievement in school, results in damage to self-esteem, which can be irreversible. Therefore, the combination of gifted with a learning disability must be understood and addressed by parents and teachers right from the beginning of school.

Each Student who is Gifted/LD is different from the others, but their similarity is that their potential does not match their achievement.

Parents take note: if your child is bright but he/she is not achieving in school, it is very important to ask the question "WHY?" as soon as possible.

Underachieving has been likened to a skin rash, since its description tells nothing of its cause (Tannenbaum, 1983).

The child who is gifted/LD is seldom referred for psychological assessment because of a skill deficiency, but rather because of the psychological manifestations of distress (Senf, 1983). It is very important to be aware of other diagnostic criteria and not wait for "the psychological manifestations of distress" to appear.

Look at the table on the following pages to learn more about where students who are Gifted/LD can be found.

## Categories of children to consider for Gifted/LD

(Table developed by Corinne Bees from experience)

<p>HIGH IQ BUT ONLY <i>AVERAGE</i> ACHIEVEMENT:  "Under-achievers"</p>	<p>Students who are academically gifted but also have learning disabilities have high academic potential. Their academic achievement <b>may not be as low</b> as that of students with average academic potential and learning disabilities, so it is easy to miss their giftedness.</p> <p>High intelligence allows the gifted student to compensate—as if the giftedness and the learning disability cancel each other out. Often, these students may be less likely to be referred for special education testing (Senf, 1983).</p>
<p>SCHOOL PHOBIC</p>	<p>School phobia is a major problem in this population of Gifted/LD students and often exhibits as abdominal pain (stomachaches) and multiple excuses to stay home.</p> <p>These ailments are something that cannot be checked with a thermometer!</p> <p>Escaping from school can also involve drugs and addiction to computers.</p>
<p>HIGH IQ OR SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT  But <i>do not</i> meet <i>all</i> criteria for gifted</p>	<p>Criteria for "gifted" are often full-scale IQ scores above 130.</p> <p>Many people who are Gifted/LD do not obtain this score due to their learning disabilities or their anxiety.</p>
<p>OBVIOUS LEARNING DISABILITY  Giftedness detected through further testing</p>	<p>A special precaution when looking at any assessment scores (reading, writing, and arithmetic):</p> <p>Anxiety and learning disability can so easily affect results. One-to-one testing and possible adaptations such as oral reading of comprehension tests may give a clearer idea of potential.</p>

<p><b>DEPRESSION</b></p> <p><b>BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS</b></p> <p><b>ADD</b> (Attention Deficit Disorder)</p>	<p>As stated previously, manifestations of distress are a common clue to Gifted/LD. However, anxiety can be hard to measure.</p> <p>Escape into drugs, sleep and/or computers might be a clue.</p> <p>Watch for students who are greatly fatigued after school. (see page 22)</p> <p>Students can be prescribed drugs for depression and/or anxiety when really it is a school-related problem.</p> <p>ADD is often a partner with Gifted/LD and can be tied to behaviour problems.</p>
<p><b>GIFTED FEMALES</b></p> <p><b>CULTURALLY DIFFERENT</b></p> <p>“Unfamiliar gifts”</p>	<p>Females who are Gifted/LD may mask both their LD and giftedness by behaviour that is designed to make them inconspicuous.</p> <p>Pay special attention to people who are from First Nations, ESL, or low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Their cultural context may mean that their gifts show in different ways. For example, watch for a poetry writer who has trouble writing prose. Students with unfamiliar gifts are sometimes so creative that they can appear hard to understand.</p>
<p><b>GIFTED FAMILY</b></p> <p><b>GIFTED FRIENDS</b></p> <p>“Non-gifted Child”</p>	<p>Look carefully at the child who does not appear gifted in a gifted family or a group of gifted peers.</p> <p>In a family, a sibling without LD may do very well, but the child with LD does not, therefore the student could have added pressure from parents and self. Sibling rivalry can exacerbate the challenges faced by a child who is Gifted/LD.</p> <p>Gifted children tend to associate together regardless of learning disabilities. A Gifted/LD student, who is Gifted/LD, is often found within this group.</p>

## Some characteristics of children who are gifted and who also have learning difficulties

Prepared mainly by Susan Whitehead,  
VSB District Resource Teacher for Gifted/LD  
and Gifted/Emotionally Fragile, 2002

If a child shows the majority of the following characteristics often or always, further assessment would probably be a good idea. As a parent, you might take this opportunity to speak to the teacher, and/or the school counsellor, or any other source who will give you satisfactory information and action. Reference to the chart that follows might be helpful in noticing how some of these behaviours can be viewed negatively.

### Intellectual strengths

The person who is Gifted/LD could have:

- expertise in at least one specific area such as music art or mechanics
  - an active imagination
  - an extensive vocabulary
  - exceptional comprehension
  - skill at tasks requiring abstract thinking and problem-solving
  - excellent visual memory
- Students who are Gifted/LD are often not marks grubbers, but knowledge seekers.

— *Corinne Bees*
- capability at puzzles and mazes
  - an exceptional ability in geometry and science
  - a sophisticated sense of humour
  - a deep commitment to and can be highly creative in activities outside of school
  - ability to grasp concepts all at once, rather than step by step

#### Possible academic difficulties

- written output problems: poor handwriting, slow at writing which often turns into writer's block
- spells poorly
- difficulty with phonics
- cannot do simple tasks but can complete more sophisticated activities
- difficulty with computation but demonstrates a high level mathematical reasoning
- does well in math but poorly in language arts
- does not do well under pressure (e.g., on timed tasks)
- has problems completing tasks that comprise a sequence of steps, but can take part in discussions that examine issues from a broad perspective
- has difficulty with rote memorization
- appears inattentive

#### Possible emotional signs

- generalizes minor academic failures to feelings of overall inadequacy
- has unrealistically high or low self-expectations
- feels academically inept
- is confused about his or her abilities
- has strong anxiety or fear of failure in academic tasks
- is sensitive to criticism of his or her own work, even constructive criticism
- experiences intense frustration
- has low self esteem
- reports feeling differently from others
- often has poor social skills with peers (but can get along with adults)

**Possible behaviour difficulties**

- may be disruptive in class
- may often be off-task
- may be disorganized
- may be especially unmotivated
- may act out without thinking about the consequences
- may make creative excuses to avoid some tasks
- may be aggressive
- may be withdrawn



## An interesting perspective on typical behaviour characteristics of students who are Gifted/LD

(Compiled by Corinne Bees and parents based on experience)

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>The "jaundiced eye"</i>	<i>Strategy</i>
Perfectionist Fearful of failure Idealist	Lazy	Teach salvaging below standard work
School phobic	Hypochondriac, fake sickness	Each day at school child needs to do something they love
Highly sensitive	Self-indulgent	Acknowledge feelings
Socially inappropriate	Immature	Talk privately, reward good acts
Socially isolated	Snobby, depressed	Need time with mental peers
Low self-esteem	Helpless	De-mystify GLD-Give warranted praise
Hyperactive, distractible	Uncontrollable	
Inattentive Fails to complete work	Doesn't care	Provide details of work for later
Psychomotor inefficiency "written output problems"	Sloppy	Use computer, make coloring optional
Frustrated-Need for control	Over-emotional	
Excessively critical of self and others	Unpleasant	Remind child that everyone needs to start somewhere
Rebellious, especially against drills and repetition Different learning style	Spoiled	Offer alternative projects which tap strengths
Disparaging of work required	Arrogant, stubborn	Challenge child to do more complex task
Becomes an expert in one area and dominates discussions in this area	Show-off	Find peer or mentor who shares interest
Denies learning disability	Defensive	Demystify
Bored-already knows content	Daydreamer	
Ethical, intense	Self-righteous, self- centered, intolerant	Acknowledge, teach about grey areas

### 3. Diagnostic assessment criteria

Currently, when a child is assessed within the Vancouver School Board (VSB), or by a private educational psychologist, standard practice is to use the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV) to determine the child's Intelligence Quotient (IQ). The WISC-IV has four composite areas: Verbal Comprehension Index, Perceptual Reasoning Index, Working Memory Index, Processing Speed Index and Full Scale IQ.

In the past, the WISC-III was used. The WISC-III has up to thirteen sub-test scores divided into Verbal and Performance sections. The combination of these two scores gives what is referred to as the Full-Scale score.

**For children who are Gifted/LD it is very important to look at the sub-test scores on either of the WISC editions.** What each of these sub-tests intends to measure can be complicated to understand. Unusually high or low scores need to be explored through further assessment. It is only when there are two consistent subtest results on measures that purport to measure the same factor that there is a valid basis for interpretation. A scatter on sub-test scores indicates a need for further assessment and hypothesis testing.

When your child is assessed, a follow-up meeting will be arranged between your family and the school psychologist. Make sure you have a full opportunity to understand what the results of the assessment mean.

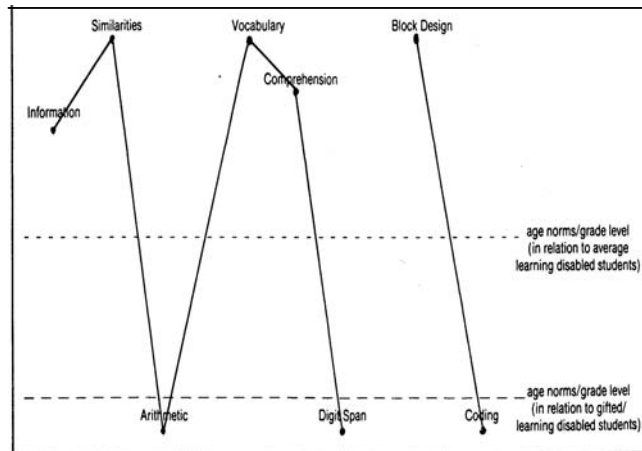
When considering placement in programs for students who are gifted, it is important to recognize that the IQ scores might be affected by the learning problem and/or stress.

It is important "to place extra weight on the child's performance in areas unaffected by the disability ... Cut-off scores for entrance into programs for gifted learners should be dropped ten points to take into account depression of scores due to disabilities. "In practice, it is rare that giftedness is identified only through IQ scores" (Brody & Mills 1998). It is much more important to recognize how the child expresses their area of passion.

## Summary of clues for identification of children who are Gifted/LD when looking at WISC scores

1. Greater scatter (peaks and valleys) on sub-tests.
2. High scores on similarities (one of the sub-tests of the WISC)
3. Low scores on digit span, coding and arithmetic (three sub-tests)

Figure 1 - Subtest scatter of Gifted/LD Students on a WISC-R



It is likely that your child would also complete academic assessment measures at this time to obtain a more complete picture of their skills. These diagnostic tests are easier to compare to school-related tasks such as reading. It is possible that low spelling scores, difficulties with reading speed, sequencing or with phonics will turn up on the academic assessment. Comparing reading comprehension scores to reading speed scores or listening vocabulary to reading vocabulary can be enlightening and provide clues to the solution we are seeking. It is possible that dips indicating a learning problem will not show up on the WISC-R.

#### 4. Two discussions about difficulties experienced by people who are Gifted/LD

##### Anxiety and Gifted/LD (Bees, 2003)

*Anxiety* is the result of being both gifted and learning disabled (see sidebar). Mental health professionals have seen many of the GOLD students. Often they stop attending school for a period of time in elementary school:

- Sometimes they are diagnosed as ADD
- Sometimes as obsessive-compulsive
- Sometimes with Asperger's Syndrome
- But always anxiety is their unwelcome companion.

In response to the first edition, a Toronto parent said "I disagree with [this statement on anxiety]. Anxiety is the result of educators /caregivers not understanding and accommodating well. Do you think the child quoted in the sidebar on p. 9 felt anxious before entering school? The child quoted could be my son."

**Anxiety...  
freezes the  
expression  
of  
knowledge.**

For most students who are gifted and who have learning difficulties a type of strangulation occurs. The gifted areas (which often involve absorbing knowledge through reading, listening, or the media) provide easy access to stimulation, energy, and new ideas. The learning difficulties (which often involve written output and organizational problems) block access to expressing this information, obtaining good grades, and the LD provides frustration and hopelessness. The two together— the gifts with the learning difficulties—could be described as a double handicap.

**“Lazy” and Gifted/LD (Corinne Bees—unpublished)**

These comments were written about eight years ago as a reaction after a meeting with a mental health counsellor who commented: "There is nothing wrong with this boy—he is just lazy." Unfortunately, this labelling is still prevalent.

"Lazy" is a superficial, trite, judgmental expression without any thought to what might be the cause of the observed behaviour. Corinne Bees prefers "unmotivated" and then she asks herself the question, "Why is this student unmotivated?" In tandem with this question comes another: "What will motivate this student?"

For our population, many reasons contribute to their lack of motivation:

"Lazy" is a superficial, trite, judgmental expression without any thought to what might be the cause of the observed behaviour.

1. **Combination of their brightness and their learning problems.** The brightness, in most cases, is their ability to quickly take in information, evaluate, synthesize and juggle it creatively, which is energizing and easy for them.

Processing problems with written output, reading or attention problems drain their energy because of the extreme effort required from them for these tasks.

Somehow, their past school experiences appear to only exacerbate this problem because their difficulties have been misunderstood and they want to give up before they start.

Corinne Bees met a 16-year old student at a conference regarding Gifted/LD, who was already attending Capilano College in North Vancouver. He was embarrassed to tell her that he was only taking three courses because that was all the energy he had. He guiltily confessed that he went home every afternoon and watched TV because he was so exhausted by his morning courses and the output work he would have to do in the evening. It is unfortunate that he felt guilty about his need for rest!

2. **Non-sequential learning style.** Many bright students are not sequential learners so the change from subject to subject as occurs in our high schools is almost intolerable.

As well, they are intensely motivated to focus on one area of interest so when the bell rings, they may find it difficult to shift gears and move from subject to subject.

3. **Boredom.** With vocabularies at the 99th percentile, and general knowledge high, students who are Gifted/LD have to sit through numerous school hours hearing information they already know. They soon learn to be unmotivated and develop an attitude that doesn't value what they can get from school. Because of this negative association with school, they might be turned off even the challenging activities.

*From a parent:*

"With the GOLD program, my son came to have an understanding of his learning style, and an awareness of how to advocate for his own adaptations. He became less critical of himself and began to understand how to deal with the stresses and anxieties that were a huge part of his life as a high school student who was gifted/LD. Now, at the post-secondary level, he negotiates his own accommodations through student services and with individual professors."

4. **Attention problems.** These difficulties interfere with the ability to achieve. For example, in math (which is based on cumulative knowledge), not only do students have trouble keeping up with the class, but if this is compounded with written output problems, the experience is very frustrating.
5. **Negative coping strategies.** The school experience leads many students who are Gifted/LD to develop many negative coping strategies: balking at completing assignments (which can seem to them like simple regurgitation - and then add in the written output problem); lying about homework and assignments which almost becomes compulsive; resisting going to school which, of course, escalates all problems; and sleeping too much.
6. **Criticism.** Negative comments or putdowns have too often been part of this student's school life.





## Part 2

### Curricular needs and strategies

#### 1. Individual Education Plan (IEP)

The IEP provides structure, goals, and plans to achieve the goals. A student's IEP is like a road map. One important aspect is the accountability provided when it is determined how far along the road the student has traveled... See Appendix (i) for sample IEP forms.

#### 2. Adaptations

Adaptations are essential for students who are Gifted/LD to retrieve information from reading and/or to express information and obtain marks for the knowledge they have. Adaptations retain the learning outcomes of the prescribed curriculum. See Appendix (ii) for an example, but there are many variations of this form.

*\* Adaptations are based on assessment information from diagnostic tests either given by district personnel such as school psychologists, and/or special education staff.*

A student usually has a discrepancy of two or more years between the scores in their strong areas, and the scores in their problem areas. For example, a student could have a score in the 99th percentile for reading comprehension and the 5th percentile for reading speed. One of this student's adaptations would be a great deal of extra time and/or a reader, and/or audio books.

*\* Adaptations are also allowed by the BC provincial government for Grade 12 provincial exams and are acquired through a process called Adjudication.*

Adjudication is organized by special education or counselling staff at secondary schools.

### 3. Enrichment

Gifted programs need to include adaptations to accommodate the student who is Gifted/LD. Yet, it is important to provide enrichment opportunities within regular school program

Enrichment activities are an ideal, but they are not always practical within the regular school setting. Many students who are Gifted/LD are so uncomfortable within school that an enrichment activity, even though it might be something normally stimulating, in school it is seen as extra work and a burden. Opportunities which seem to help are the provision for in-depth discussions (with a critical thinking component) in which students who are Gifted/LD often excel. Provision of advanced reading, creative writing projects or allowing a child to make a movie rather than write can be beneficial.

Occasionally, students who are Gifted/LD are successful in acceleration courses such as advanced English or fast-track Math. It is crucial to consider the particular personality and interests of each student.

### 4. Strategies for parents, teachers, and profes

Students who are Gifted/LD have learned to react stressfully to school tasks which focus on their problem area. These students learn to expect that school tasks will be a problem. The key to reducing the stress is to somehow change the perception. Then, with luck, the learned response of helplessness, and the resulting failure will also change.

What Is One Important Thing You as a Teacher Can Do?

Don't expect the parent to "cure" the child. The only cure I know is success, maturity, and getting out of secondary school!

—Corinne Bees

The following suggestions can help reduce school stress and increase chances of success. They are essential, and if you do not agree or understand any one of these strategies, please discuss this with someone who has expertise in this area.

1. **Foster a trust relationship:** in any given day students can over-react to the many sources of frustration for them, so do your best to maintain trust to help them. Ask them what is happening to them.
2. **Use language of encouragement; avoid negative assumptions, judgmental or discouraging language:** for example, use "I hope you can" rather than "You should" or ask the student if they can.
3. **Schools should provide a safe place:** this could be a resource room in any school.
4. **Use all the tools available:** computers, calculators, I-Pods, CD/MP3 players with headphones, adaptations, enough time, photocopied worksheets.
5. **Provide a flexible timetable:** consider a partial timetable if that will keep the student in school.
6. **Have and use your sense of humour:** you can diffuse anxiety and capitalize on the often quirky sense of humour of the students who are Gifted/LD.
7. **Don't sweat the small stuff:** misspelling and finger twitching are "small stuff".
8. **Let the student talk:** make sure the focus is on the student not the adult, and give the student time to problem-solve.
9. **Provide structure with empowerment:** students need to participate in establishing clear expectations. Structure is essential for students who are Gifted/LD.
10. **Provide non-judgmental help with organizing:** everyone involved will likely experience frustration with the student's struggle to be organized.

11. **Understand that the student cannot succeed just by trying harder:** avoid the platitude "just try harder." Look at all the other strategies in this section!
12. **Provide one-to-one help if necessary:** tutors are often preferable to parents as homework support people, especially for high school students. (Parents often have such anxiety themselves over their child's success that their anxiety interferes with their ability to help. The atmosphere is too charged.) If a family does not have the finances to pay for a tutor, seek help from school. There might be peer tutors or a homework club. Ask the student's resource teacher or counsellor.
13. **Provide sympathy and understanding but not pity or condescension:** teacher to another teacher in front of the student: *"Oh look, our Johnnie is trying so hard!"*
14. **Demystify their learning problems:** in an atmosphere of trust and knowledge, a student can learn to understand their learning strengths and weaknesses.
15. **Help with self-advocacy:** role-playing is one way to learn these skills. A staff person who knows the student might still need to be the advocate though, because some people will listen better to professionals rather than students.
16. **Celebrate:** any success or goal reached, however small, should be celebrated.
17. **Be careful of expecting more once the student starts succeeding:** another very easy temptation.
18. **Medication:** often used but not always needed if the strategies above can be used.

19. **Minimize writing demands:** particularly important in math where questions could be photocopied rather than re-written.

20. **Practice forgiveness.**

Since many students who are Gifted/LD often also have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), here are specific strategies to help with this problem:

1. Encourage doodling, drawing, or use of a small squeeze ball to help student focus while listening or waiting.
2. Seat student near teacher's desk or front of room.
3. Surround the student who is Gifted/LD with good role models.
4. Avoid distracting stimuli such as high traffic areas, windows, etc.
5. Listen to student about what helps them focus. Often music can help, and sometimes watching television facilitates written work.
6. Prepare students for transitions – they do not change easily.

Other suggestions – from a parent:

1. Use massage - cranial-sacral for concentration; shoulders and back for symptoms of anxiety.
2. Use relaxation techniques - progressive relaxation, yoga, guided visualization.
3. Exercise in any form.
4. Volunteer as a family in an area of interest.
5. Be mindful of recreational computer use.

6. Look for mentoring possibilities.
7. Look for clubs.
8. Try naturopathic and homeopathic doctors.
9. Try aromatherapy - for relaxation, concentration, mood elevation, sleep etc.
10. Have good sleep hygiene - regular bedtimes, routines, not too much difference on weekends etc.

## **5. Professional development**

Students, parents, and teachers need to keep abreast of new knowledge regarding understanding and education of the Gifted/LD population. Participation in conferences, training programs, continuing education, and Web discussions is essential. Parents are welcome to participate in VSB educational conferences.

## Part 3

### Comments from parents of students who are Gifted/LD, and from GOLD alumni

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#### Parent comments

*Joe's mother:* Frustrations: "As Joe leaves school after 13 agonizing years, I need to put into writing some of my thoughts on the difficulty of navigating a Gifted/LD student through the public school system. I would like to have begun this by saying 'as Joe graduates' but unfortunately this year, he had to drop two courses and make a choice between graduating and his mental health. After struggling for all those years with graduation as his goal, halfway through his final year he was ready to give it all up and leave. This is due to the day to day stress of coming to school and not being able to function within the system as it exists. I don't think it should have to be this stressful. School is turning off a large group of really bright students who just don't fit the mold."

*Chris' mother:* "I felt as if I had a constant struggle to keep Chris in school: I was struggling with teachers, some of whom did not understand the mechanism or impact of learning disabilities; I was struggling with Chris, who resisted any accommodations that made him seem 'different' from the other students. He seemed more willing to fail in silence than to succeed and seem conspicuous."

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*Liam's mother:* "My son is doing fine in Grade 8 GOLD. He has such a great sense of himself and last year I wasn't at all sure how high school would be for him. The big change I see is that he's spending a lot less energy covering up his difficulties and he's becoming a lot more articulate about his learning needs."

*Colin's mother:* "Our son has moved into Distance Ed Math 10E and this seems to be working very well for him. A couple of teachers were extremely annoyed at us for not forcing him to stay in Math 10 Academic and making him work harder - a neat trick if you can do it. There was a delicious irony here, as last year his math teacher sent us a letter urging us to choose Math 10E during his course planning. We left the decision to him and he refused. At that point they were annoyed with us for not putting him in Math 10E. (Math 10E is the "non-academic" path)... Teachers are well-meaning but continually explain to us how Colin could be successful at school if he'd just work harder, get organized, hand his assignments in on time, etc."

*Donalda* (to Corinne Bees following a GOLD information night) "I was at the GOLD Program information overview last night with my son and my grandson who is a potential candidate. The information you gave about the Program had an unexpected result. My son (31, gifted, ADD, perhaps LD) was overcome several times as you described 'people like him' as interesting, not deficient. This was an epiphany for him - the realization that there was nothing WRONG with him, he was just different. Although we had always told him this, he said he thought we had said it because he was our son. You were a stranger, and you still thought kids like him were great. He said he was almost in tears several times, and has been in quite an emotional state since then, internalizing all this new information. Whether my grandson gets into the Program or not, please know that you are, and have been, doing wonderful things for kids. Thank you for what you have given my son."

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### Gold alumni comments and achievements

*Julian Steven, Tyler:* Good things about GOLD are discussions about problems and adaptations. The GOLD group is more personal than a Skills Block, and I get more done. GOLD is about a specific group and because it is a legitimate program I get the help I need - it is not just a study block like Skills, and the school doesn't care as much about Skills kids. The group is important partly because the students can accomplish more and help each other - it is more personal than a Skills Block.



*Jeremy* : finished grade 12 at PW in 1999 without graduating: will graduate in Political Science from the University of Toronto in 2006 and is planning to follow with a Masters):

Grade 11: "I have many problems with the school system which doesn't understand what I do. The GOLD room is a refuge and help."

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2nd year university: "Part of what GOLD did is provide an advocate for the student. I remember the Special Education Assistant drove me to the final Grade 9 math test which enabled me to pass Grade 9. Not just driving me, but being aware enough of the situation to do it, is what is unique to GOLD." (This student had such high anxiety he would have avoided writing the test and failed.)

Learning styles and university - September 2006: "There is considerable advantage, and perhaps indeed need, for providing flexibility between types of academic tasks for certain students. For example even in my reasonably successful university career, I can say that there is a completely consistent difference between my performance on essays and in-class exams. I have come to determine my work patterns and even my decision to take a course based partly on the relative weight given to exams versus essays, because I know that I will always receive a lower grade in a course with in-class exams. All students need to have a reasonable facility with exams but even here at the reputedly best university in the country, I have quite a bit of latitude in choosing between courses that focus more on exams and those which focus more on essays. This latitude INCREASES the higher up the ladder in school you get. Providing flexibility at earlier levels (high school) may simply prevent that student from 'turning off' early."

Some additional GOLD graduates:

Alex Catamo: (PW grad 2008) Alex is working at Brain Boost Tutoring as a tutor, artist and IT support person.

Patrick Perry (PW grad 2008). Patrick just completed his first year at Corpus Christi College at UBC. "I loved my courses; they were a buffet of knowledge."

*Andrew Ferguson:* (valedictorian 2006): Andrew produced and wrote a play "Why I Hate Utah?" which was performed at Carousel Theatre in conjunction with Young Company Players in June 2008. He has attended Langara College for two semesters to get college English credits for possible future pursuit of a theater program. He is now working on writing two plays.

*Jamie Unwin*(PW grad 2004): Jamie graduated from the University of Washington in 2008 in Environmental Geography and the Environment and Urban planning. She plans to apply for the Resource Management Program Grad School at SFU for Sept 2010. "I am truly grateful for my time in GOLD as I believe I would not have been able to meet all my goals without the confidence and knowledge I gained from GOLD."

Steven Struyk(PW grad 2001) Steven started post-secondary at BCIT in entry level trades training. He then went to Selkirk College and completed two years to obtain his fine woodworking certificate. He now works at "The Joint", a woodworking studio. Selkirk College and his current work are creative and fulfilling opportunities.

*Drew Thompson:*(PW grad 2001) Andrew graduated with a B.A. in Human Geography and International Relations from UBC in 2009. He is currently working in Geneva as a research assistant within an organization that is part of the United Nations. "My job requires all those skills many GOLD people find difficult—reading, summarizing, sitting for hours, writing and reading e-mails, and writing clearly without spelling or grammatical errors. I believe that because I always had to work on my weaknesses, they have become my strengths and have come to complement my natural gifts. While I never had great university aspirations in high school due to overwhelming difficulties, I have now put myself in an excellent position to go on to graduate level schooling.

Robert Hausch:(PW grad 2001) Robert graduated from UBC in Electrical Engineering in 2006. "I hated elementary school, GOLD allowed me to survive high school, and I loved university. I probably would not have got there without GOLD.

## Part 4

### Services for students who are Gifted/LD (VSB, private, and independent)

#### Vancouver School Board (VSB)

##### 1. Elementary and Secondary school-based support for learners who are Gifted/LD

###### *Your classroom teacher*

- Identification of student's learning differences and learning needs
- Liaison with parents
- Referral to out-of-class resource

###### *School-based resource teacher*

- In elementary school: either at district or school level
- In secondary school: part of special education department
- Offers further assessment
- Recommends district support and resources for gifted enrichment education and/or support from learning assistance/skills development centre.
- Liaises with classroom teachers, school-based team, school administrator, parents, and district program staff and services.
- Possible recommendation to school-based team.

### *School-based team*

School-based teams should be in all schools. They are usually comprised of special education personnel, counsellor, administration, classroom teacher, and sometimes the school psychologist. The team:

- Reviews students who have been brought to their attention.
- Identifies students for psycho-educational assessments.

Psycho-Educational Assessments are undertaken when it seems likely that a student may be identified, through this assessment and in combination with others, to be either Gifted or Learning Disabled, or both.

School-based teams recommend psycho-educational assessments, **but** the VSB does not have the number of school psychologists to meet the demand, so sometimes private assessments are suggested. (See page 18 for discussion of WISC test.

- Recommends students for Individual Educational Plan (IEP) development.

See page 25 for a discussion of IEPs. IEPs are usually developed in elementary by the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) Teacher or in secondary by the Skills Development Centre Teacher in cooperation with the parent and student. If a student does not have this support, a counsellor or resource teacher may write the IEP. See Appendix (i) for Sample IEP forms

- Refers students to district personnel such as the Resource Teacher for Gifted/LD.

*Area Counsellors (elementary) and School Counsellors (secondary)*

- Advocate for students.
- Listen to students to make sure their perspective is heard.
- Can provide mediation or reframing to make sure the best fit is provided for the student regarding teacher and timetable.
- Act as a liaison between elementary and secondary personnel.
- Provide guidance for developing and maintaining social networks.
- Provide information regarding appropriate programs: elementary and secondary district programs, secondary apprenticeship programs, and post-secondary programs.
- Are members of the school-based team.
- Can contribute to IEPs.
- Can help students with strategies to deal with anxiety

*School Administrator*

- Part of School-based team
- Supports parents and teachers by providing information about student needs and program options.

## 2. District resources

### *Elementary Resource Teacher for students who are Gifted/LD and students who are Gifted/Emotionally Fragile (Gifted/EF)*

- Provides support to schools by identification of students who are Gifted/LD or Gifted/EF, and provides assistance to classroom teachers and information-sharing about the needs of this group.
- Provides direct service to students who are Gifted/LD or Gifted/EF.
- Provides some programs for identified students who are Gifted/LD.
- Provides input to the GOLD Program referral process.
- Works collaboratively with School-based Teams, District itinerant staff, and outside agencies.

### *School psychologists, speech and language pathologists and occupational therapists*

- Provide assessment of students.
- Provide information on needs and effective coping strategies.

## 3. Vancouver School Board personnel

Catherine Remedios Director of Instruction, Learning Services	cremedios@vsb.bc.ca	604 713-5200
Suzette Magri Administrative Assistant	smagri@vsb.bc.ca	604 713-5240
Lois Parmar Gifted Coordinator	lparmar@vsb.bc.ca	604 713-5229
Megan Thrift District Gifted/LD Resource Teacher	mthrift@vsb.bc.ca	604 713-4469
Chris Bromige Teacher, GOLD Program, Prince of Wales	cbromige@vsb.bc.ca	604-713-8974 Ext. 3105

#### 4. VSB advisory groups

- Special Education Advisory Committee  
Chair: Catherine Remedios
- Gifted Advisory Committee - Chair: Catherine Remedios

#### 5. Programs for students who are Gifted/LD

##### *Elementary school*

- Multi-Age Cluster Classes (MACCs) - are situated in Nelson, Osler, Tecumseh, and Queen Mary schools. MACCs provide academic challenges and social & emotional support, for students who are gifted, by providing an intellectual peer group, and conceptually advanced curricula.

##### *Secondary school*

- GOLD Program at Prince of Wales Secondary School - provides support to approximately 30 students who have been assessed as being intellectually gifted and learning disabled.
- A second GOLD Program, currently for grade 8 students, will commence in September 2007 at David Thompson Secondary School on the east side of Vancouver.

The guiding principle of PW GOLD is integration with sufficient support for success. For the most part, students are integrated into the mainstream of this highly academic school culture.

The program accepts six to eight students every year. This intake of students is chiefly incoming Grade 8s, although, on occasion, students in Grades 9-12 are accepted.

For a complete description of the program and the referral process, see Appendix (iii).

- Hamber Challenge Program at Eric Hamber Secondary School - currently two students who are enrolled in the Hamber Challenge program, are Gifted/LD and appear to be meeting with some success.
- Kitsilano Secondary Multi-Age Cluster Class (MACC) - Kitsilano Secondary School—the only secondary MACC in Vancouver but may not be suitable for students who are Gifted/LD.
- Mini-Schools - Students who are Gifted/LD have seldom been successful in Mini-Schools. The idea seems good but in actual fact, the perceived pressure and the overall academic demands interfere with success. In some circumstances, a student has taken one course in a Mini-School class and this seems to have been beneficial.
- Distributed Learning (formerly Distance Education) - With supervision or a coach, this option has often been productive. Students work at their own pace, and distance education is a way to avoid student/teacher conflict.

*"Our son was very successful with Distance Ed Math 10E last year and completed it in about 5 months. He is now (Sept/06) taking SS11, English 11 and Math 10E by Distance Ed. The thing that works really well for him is that the teacher interaction was kind of removed from the equation...no discussion about not trying hard enough ...It was also a bonus for us because we were able to help him stay on track since he and we knew exactly what needed to be done and we could jointly set timelines for completion of assignments and testing. He probably couldn't have managed this in Grade 8 and 9 but in Grade 10, he was definitely ready." — Parent of student who is Gifted/LD*



- Adult education programs - This is another practical option to support completing graduation requirements. The VSB operates seven adult education centres in Vancouver:
  - Downtown East Education Centre - 101 Powell Street
  - Gathering Place Education Centre - 609 Helmcken Street
  - Hastings Education Centre - 1661 Napier Street
  - Main Street Education Centre - 333 Terminal Avenue
  - Musqueam Adult Learning Centre - 6735 Salish Drive
  - Roberts Education Centre - 1666 Comox Street
  - South Hill Education Centre - 6010 Fraser Street
- Vancouver City College - High school can also be completed at this college in the adult education department.
- Information on the Web about adult education:  
<http://www.vsb.bc.ca/vsbprograms/adultstudents/adulteducationcenter.htm>

## Other services—private and independent

### Elementary

- Choice Learning Centre, Richmond and a satellite at Jericho Hill Centre in Vancouver - particularly for children who are gifted. Tel: 604 273-2418. Web: [www.choiceschool.org/](http://www.choiceschool.org/)
- Fraser Academy, Vancouver - uses an approach to teaching that encourages students to understand, accept and take advantage of their particular learning styles - Tel: 604 736-5575. Web: [www.fraser-academy.bc.ca/](http://www.fraser-academy.bc.ca/)
- Kenneth Gordon School, Burnaby - particularly for children who are learning disabled. Tel: 604 524-5224. Web: [www.kennethgordon.bc.ca/](http://www.kennethgordon.bc.ca/)

- Madrona School, Vancouver - enriched, academic program; moderate LDs and written output disorder can be accommodated.
- Tel: 604 732-9965. Web: [www.madronaschool.com](http://www.madronaschool.com)
- Silbury School & Resource Centre for the Gifted and Creative, Vancouver - Tel. 604 261-4695. Web: [www.silbury.ca](http://www.silbury.ca)
- Windsor House Parent Participation School, North Vancouver - Tel: 604 903-3366 Web: [www.whs.at.org/](http://www.whs.at.org/)

### Secondary

- Fraser Academy, Vancouver - see listing under Elementary
- Windsor House Parent Participation School, North Vancouver - see listing under Elementary

*Adult education programs* - see page 41

### *Post-secondary*

Post-secondary institutions permit adaptations and accommodations similar to those provided in public school. Students need to make arrangements through the counsellor or resource centre.

- Contact the Learning Disabilities Association of BC (LDABC) for information - Tel: 604 873-8139. Email: [info@ldav.ca](mailto:info@ldav.ca). Web: [www.ldav.ca](http://www.ldav.ca)
- UBC Access & Diversity Program - Web: [www.students.ubc.ca/access](http://www.students.ubc.ca/access)

- SFU Centre for Students with Disabilities - Tel: 604 291-3112.  
Web: [www.sfu.ca/csd/index.htm](http://www.sfu.ca/csd/index.htm)
- Langara Disability Services Program - Web:  
<http://www.langara.bc.ca/disability/>
- Kwantlen College - Web: <http://www.kwantlen.bc.ca/ssd/>
- Capilano College - Tel: 604 983-7526. Web:  
[www.dynamic.capcollege.bc.ca/Page27761.aspx](http://www.dynamic.capcollege.bc.ca/Page27761.aspx)
- Vancouver Community College - Tel: 604 443-8448;  
(Broadway) 604-871-7210 Web:  
[www.vcc.ca/students/disabilities.cfm](http://www.vcc.ca/students/disabilities.cfm)

#### *Private assessments*

Obtain names of psychologists who can give psycho-educational assessments:

- Gifted Children's Association of BC (GCABC). Tel: 1-877-707-6111. Web: <http://www.gcabc.ca>
- Learning Disabilities Association of BC (LDABC) - Tel: 604 873-8139. Email: [info@ldav.ca](mailto:info@ldav.ca). Web:  
[www.ldac-taac.ca/chapters/bc-e.asp#prov](http://www.ldac-taac.ca/chapters/bc-e.asp#prov)
- BC Psychological Association (BCPA). Tel: 604-730-0501.  
Web: [www.psychologists.bc.ca/](http://www.psychologists.bc.ca/)

#### *Other supports*

- Gifted Children's Association of BC (GCABC). Gifted Children's Association of BC meets monthly in Vancouver at Osler Elementary, 5970 Selkirk Street, but they have chapters in other areas of BC. Toll free 1-877-707-6111.

- Advocacy Group for Gifted/LD call Corinne Bees at 604-224-6255 or email: [gldvancouver@gmail.com](mailto:gldvancouver@gmail.com). This group meets monthly in Vancouver.

*Private tutoring services* - consult the Yellow Pages under "tutoring".

*Web*

- <http://gtworld.org/gtspeclist.html>
- <http://www3.bc.sympatico.ca/giftedcanada/page8.html>
- [http://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html)
- <http://giftedandlearningdisabled.blogspot.com/>
- <http://www.2enewsletter.com/> 2E Newsletter
- [www.uniquelygifted.org](http://www.uniquelygifted.org) - Uniquely Gifted
- [www.hoagiesgifted.org/twice\\_exceptional.htm](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/twice_exceptional.htm). Hoagies Gifted
- <http://www.gldadvocacy.info/> - GLD Advocacy Group, Vancouver
- <http://www.gldnetworkbc.org>- GLD Network BC
- 



## Suggested reading

- *Uniquely Gifted: Identifying and Meeting the Needs of the Twice-Exceptional Student*, Ed. Kiesa Kay. Gilsum, USA: Avocus Publishing, 2000.
- *The Myth of Laziness*, Mel Levine. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.
- *The Mislabeled Child: How Understanding Your Child's Unique Learning Style Can Open the Door to Success*, by Brocke Eide, MD and Fernette Eide, MD. New York: Hyperion Books, 2006.
- *In the Mind's Eye: Visual Thinkers, Gifted People with Learning Difficulties, Computer Images, and the Ironies of Creativity* by Thomas West. Tonbridge, UK: Prometheus, 1991.
- *Intellectual Giftedness in Disabled Persons*, by Joanne Whitmore and June Maker. Rockville, USA: Aspen Systems Corp., 1985.
- *Scattered Minds* by Gabor Maté. New York: Vintage Press, 2000.
- *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*, by Mark Haddon. New York: Vintage Press, 2004.

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- Brody L.E. and Mills, C.J.(1997). Gifted children with learning disabilities: A review of the issues, *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, V 30,(3) 282-286.
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- Silverman, L., (1989). Invisible gifts, invisible handicaps, *Roeper Review*, XII (1), 37-42.

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- Senf, G.M.(1983) The nature and identification of learning disabilities and their relationship to the gifted child, in L. Fox, L. Brody and D. Tobin, (Eds), *Learning disabled/gifted children* (pp.37-49). Austin, TX: PRO-ED
- Tannenbaum, A.J., & Baldwin, L.J. (1983). Giftedness and learning disability: A paradoxical combination. In L. H. Fox, L. Brody, D. Tobin (Eds), *Learning disabled/gifted children: Identification and programming* (pp 11-36) Austin, TX: PRO-ED.
- Wechsler, D. (1974) *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children* - revised New York: Psychological Corporation.









Appendix (ii)

**Adaptations Sheet**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Student # \_\_\_\_\_ Home tel # \_\_\_\_\_

This student has a learning disability. I would like to ask your cooperation in allowing the student to use the following adaptations or modifications. Please consult with me if you have questions or concerns. Chris Bromige local # 2105

**IEP Goals:** Math B; Sci A; SS A; Eng A

**Student Strengths**

- Verbal comprehension (98<sup>th</sup> %-ile)
- Processing speed
- Huge range of general information & knowledge

**Student Needs**

- Written output (legibility, speed, organization, and sequencing of ideas are particular challenges)
- Needs support with Spelling & Math

**ADAPTATIONS FOR TESTS & ASSIGNMENTS**

Ministry of Education designated Learning Disability? <u>YES</u>	Bromige	Taylor	Borgen	Greig	Lng	Art/Dra ma King Elec
Adaptations for Tests & Assignments	EN	SS	MA	SC		
Extended time (tasks requiring written output)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Separate setting (unless quantity is reduced)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Help with organization and planning	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Provision of in-class notes: photocopied or carbon	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Spelling – No penalty for IN-CLASS assignments or tests	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Use of calculator		✓	✓	✓		
Use of audio tape for responses (or equivalent)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Use of computer with spell-check	✓	✓		✓		
Use of scribe (on request)	✓	✓		✓		
Supervised breaks						
Use of reader or electronic technology to read						
Use of personal music player during seat work to aid concentration	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Alternative assignments: change type – for example, submit audio tape rather than essay reduce number or length of assignments reduce need for work shown in math	✓	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓		
Preferential seating (near front, minimize distraction from peers)						

**To be completed by Special Education Staff: end of year comments-goals achieved and focus for next year:**

*Appendix (iii)*

## Description of the GOLD Program at Prince of Wales Secondary School

The Program accepts six to eight students every year. This intake of students is chiefly incoming Grade 8s although, on occasion, students in Grades 9-12 are accepted.

### GOLD program structure:

#### *What happens in "GOLD" blocks?*

All GOLD students spend at least one (of eight) blocks in the GOLD room. Time spent in the GOLD room is intended to serve many purposes. The time GOLD students spend in the classroom has a mix of objectives, including to:

1. Help students organize and complete work for their academic and/or elective courses;
2. Educate students about being Gifted/LD — attempt to demystify their learning needs and profiles;
3. Build peer support and community among learners who often have felt isolated and marginalized;
4. Teach strategies for organization, studying, and presentation of knowledge;
5. Provide opportunities to hold discussions on various issues to provide enrichment and to teach critical thinking, problem solving, ethics, and communication skills.

The GOLD room is also open during most breaks, at lunchtime, and before and after school. Students from GOLD often drift in, sometimes with mainstream friends, to hang out.

Grade 8 students in GOLD take GOLD English 8 with their GOLD teacher and their peers. This small class can respond to individual needs and interests. This element of the Program design arose partly because many of the GOLD population have problems with written output, while others struggle with reading.

Another reason for providing English 8 through GOLD is that the students then have more time in the refuge of the GOLD room, away from the madding crowd.

Most students entering GOLD in Grade 8 will graduate with a full Dogwood Diploma five years later. Some students will take longer to reach that goal; one or two might drop out, and some students may not need to be in the GOLD Program in their later years of high school. Sometimes, GOLD does not turn out to be a good fit, in which case staff will help facilitate a change to a more appropriate program.

#### **The GOLD student's experience:**

Teachers and administrators at PW Secondary are familiar with typical Gifted/LD profiles—the Program has been at the school for approximately 12 years.

GOLD staff does their utmost to match a student's learning profile to a particular teacher's teaching style. Most staff at Prince of Wales has extensive experience working with adaptations driven by individual learning needs of particular students.

Students at GOLD have every opportunity to participate in school culture. Their social experience is determined chiefly by their own personality and behaviour. Students from GOLD have been elected to the Student Council; have been members of sports teams, stars in drama productions, winners of Fine Arts & Writing awards, musicians in Stage Band, and leaders of school clubs. There are no doors closed to GOLD students because of their

association with the Program. In fact, the Valedictorian of the 2006 graduating class was a GOLD student.

*If a student is in the GOLD Program, does that mean that he/she would not have time to take as many electives?*

Not necessarily. This is frequently mitigated somewhat by the fact that most GOLD students choose not to take a language. (Students assessed with particular learning disabilities can apply for a Second Language Exemption at most universities and colleges in Canada.)

*Are there any special extra-curricular activities?*

Usually, there are some field trips organized for GOLD students. They can participate with any field trips and extra-curricular activities offered to mainstream students.

PW GOLD holds information sessions for parents, students, area counsellors, and resource teachers usually in November.

#### Criteria for GOLD referral

1. Meets the definition of a student who is Gifted/LD.
2. Teacher recommendation.
3. District Resource Teacher-GLD recommendation based on student interview.
4. For students to be successful in the GOLD Program, they must demonstrate some of the following characteristics:
  - a. Average to above-average reading comprehension skills.
  - b. Ability to focus their attention on some academic tasks.
  - c. Interest in at least one academic subject, in which they have shown the potential for success.

- d. An interest in achieving at least average marks and willing to work toward achieving these marks.
- e. Ability to acknowledge and take some responsibility for their learning or behaviour difficulties.

Students who are Gifted/LD have complex characteristics. Brody defines students who are gifted/LD as those “with an overall IQ score in the superior range, or a partial IQ score in the superior range, or a special talent and a discrepancy between cognitive ability and achievement based on some processing problem.”

In addition to demonstrated talents or gifts, in one or more areas, students who are Gifted/LD may present with inconsistencies or discrepancies in academic performance due to intrinsic learning disabilities or processing difficulties. On standardized IQ tests, students who are Gifted/LD will often score within the superior to very superior ranges in areas of strength, but they may score much lower in areas affected by their learning/processing disorders.

If a school-based team has recommended a placement in GOLD for a student in Grades 8 to 12, parents should contact Learning Services to inquire about space in the GOLD Programs.

*How do students apply for the GOLD Program?*

Parents wishing to have their Grade 7 child considered for the GOLD Program should contact the District Resource Teacher, Megan Thrift, for Gifted/LD, Gifted/EF, at [mthrift@vsb.bc.ca](mailto:mthrift@vsb.bc.ca) to begin the process by mid-October of Grade 7 at the latest. If applying from outside the VSB, parents should contact Learning Services at the VSB directly.

Parents and students wanting to know more about the GOLD Program should attend the GOLD information night in mid-November.

Referral packages must include copies of psycho-educational assessments, teacher reports, writing samples, referral checklists, and school records, and should be submitted to Learning Services by December 15.

A "placement meeting" will take place in late January, when the GOLD teacher, Case Managers, District Resource Teacher for Gifted/LD, and a District Psychologist will determine which students are suitable for placement in the GOLD program.

If a school-based team has recommended a placement in GOLD for a student in Grades 8 to 12, parents should contact Learning Services to inquire about space in either GOLD Program.





## Feedback on the Gifted/LD Handbook

We would really appreciate your signed or anonymous feedback on this manual. It is a work-in-progress, intended to help and support families of Gifted/LD students, and Gifted/LD students, and teachers. It would be helpful for us to know what is helpful in this handbook—and anything that you feel is missing or would enhance the information in the handbook.

I found this handbook (*check one*):

not at all helpful	somewhat helpful	helpful	very helpful

**Three things I found useful in this handbook were:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Three points of information I wish you would include in your handbook are:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**The 3 most important things I wish I had known all along about students who are Gifted/LD are:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Any other comments regarding enhancing this handbook:** (Feel free to use other sheets)

I am  a parent of a Gifted/LD student       a Gifted/LD student  
 a teacher of a Gifted/LD student       other \_\_\_\_\_

I have been aware of the term "Gifted/LD " for \_\_\_\_\_ (how long?)

Optional: Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**For more information or to order more handbooks email:**

[gldvancouver@gmail.com](mailto:gldvancouver@gmail.com)

Please return this form to: Ms. Corinne Bees, c/o Chris Bromige, GOLD Program, Prince of Wales Secondary School, 2250 Eddington Drive, Vancouver, BC V6L 2E7

## **Having a Hard Time at Learning**

To turn around and not know where you  
are

A book sits in front with words that are  
there but gone

A note sits on a C- essay – “Dyslexia” it  
says

Grabbing in anger at the label

Crumple it into a ball and throw it at the  
world

Perfectionism

A flawed jewel

*Taylor York*