

Who are GLD children?

Children of high intelligence who also have one or more developmental differences are described as gifted with learning disabilities (GLD).

GLD children may be gifted in understanding and identifying complex relationships, vocabulary, abstract reasoning ability (including mathematical reasoning), creativity, wide general knowledge, and observational skills. At the same time, the mechanics involved in writing, reading, basic computation and completing academic tasks, particularly timed tests, often present great difficulties. GLD children frequently have poor time management and organisational abilities, and/or inconsistent attention issues.

How are GLD children identified?

The most common and significant feature of a GLD child is uneven academic performance of an unusual kind. They may be good at difficult, abstract problems and poor at simple tasks. They may achieve outstandingly high results in academic competitions outside of school, yet be achieving mediocre results on school assessments and exams.

The greatest difficulty in identifying GLD children is that their high intelligence can compensate for their learning disability, and their disability masks their intelligence. This means they may present at school as a generally “average” student.

Psychometric (IQ) testing will usually identify GLD children. They typically score very highly in some sub-tests and poorly in others. Audiology and behavioural optometry tests may expose a hidden auditory or visual processing disorder, and a developmental paediatrician may identify hidden attention issues such as ADHD (in particular the purely inattentive sub-type of ADHD).

Why do difficulties with school occur for GLD children?

As GLD children progress from primary school to high school, academic work demands more hours of sustained effort, and students are presented with ever increasing organisational and time management challenges. When they can't cope, GLD children often find themselves labelled as ‘lazy’ or ‘careless’.

At this point, the unidentified GLD child may become more and more frustrated and mystified because the compensation strategies which they unknowingly developed in primary school cease to work as well, if at all. Their high intelligence is no longer able to compensate for their learning disability, and their school performance steadily diminishes, even though they feel that they are making considerable effort.

After repeated failures, unidentified GLD children tend to conclude that they are “stupid”. The result is continuing underachievement, lack of motivation, low self-esteem and disenchantment with school.

What intervention is best for GLD children?

It is important that appropriate support be given to the child, particularly at school. Ordinary remedial programs are generally disastrous for GLD children, who are not assisted by more repetition of facts presented sequentially. GLD interventions should focus primarily on the child's strengths, teaching to their giftedness and, through those strengths, help the child discover how to compensate for weaknesses and build resilience.

There is no single solution suited to all GLD children. It is a matter of gradually fitting together the puzzle pieces and responding to each strength and weakness. The key to success is usually a well-informed teacher who is able to both feed the gifts and accommodate the disabilities.

Is there a GLD checklist?

The following characteristics of GLD children were identified by Dr Linda Silverman:

- Excellent long-term memory, but poor short-term memory
- Speaking vocabulary more sophisticated than written vocabulary
- Excels in reading comprehension, but struggles with decoding words
- Excels in mathematical reasoning, but does poorly at computation
- Shows advanced verbals skills in discussions, but struggles with written work
- Grasps abstract concepts, but struggles with easy, sequential material
- Thrives on complexity, but has difficulty with rote memorization
- Is highly creative, inventive, imaginative, but often inattentive in class
- Reasons well, but emotions can overpower reasoning
- Keen visual skills, poor auditory memory
- May have acute hearing, but poor listening skills
- Has very interesting ideas, but weak in language mechanics (grammar, punctuation, etc)
- Extremely curious; asks many questions, but unable to learn unless interested
- Has a high degree of energy
- Perceptive and insightful, but often very disorganised
- Performs poorly on timed tests
- Arrives at correct solutions intuitively, but can't explain how they were reached
- Finds clever ways to avoid weak areas

Under the auspices of the NSWAGTC, the **GLD Support Group** provides a regular forum where parents, teachers, counsellors and others concerned about GLD children can obtain information, support and advice on assisting, motivating, and advocating for GLD children.

Group members represent a very wide continuum, from those who have documented “proof” that their child is gifted and/or has learning disabilities, to those who simply have a “feeling” that all is not right with their child’s school performance.

Meetings may feature a guest speaker, but always provide an opportunity for sharing information with others in a similar situation. Topics addressed in the past include interpreting IQ assessments, applying for Board of Studies special exam provisions, liaising with schools and teachers, as well as a wide variety of therapies and learning disabilities. Meetings tend to be quite informal, no minutes are taken, and discussions remain confidential.

Children do not attend our meetings.

Meetings are held on a Thursday evening during term time starting around 7.30 pm and finishing around 9.30 pm, although participants sometimes arrive late and leave early. As the Group receives no funding, participants are asked to donate \$2 at each meeting towards administrative expenses.

Meetings are held in the Community Room at Macquarie Shopping Centre in North Ryde (go to L4 rooftop parking level, next to Medical Centre).

Meeting Dates for 2011:
10 Feb, 3 Mar, 28 Apr, 2 Jun
July, Aug, Sep, Oct & Nov: TBA

Where to from here?

The NSWAGTC has people who are happy to speak with you about your concerns. As well as attending a GLD meeting, you may:

Contact the Resource Centre and speak to staff for support, information and literature on GLD issues;

Contact the GLD Group coordinator, Carol Barnes, directly: carol@bartink.com.au;

Drop in to the Resource Centre to have a look at our extensive resources. Join the Association and you can also borrow books from our library;

Ask the Resource Centre to join the GLD closed electronic forum (if you are a current financial member of NSWAGTC) so you can ask questions or share information and research with other members, as well as receive details of upcoming meetings and events related to GLD issues;

Visit our web site for a comprehensive annotated list of links to introductory information about GLD, as well as about learning disabilities, ADHD, Asperger’s Syndrome, auditory processing, visual processing and sensory integration disorders, and academic underachievement in general.

www.nswagtc.org.au

The NSWAGTC Resource Centre is located at Hilltop Road Public School, Hilltop Road, Merrylands 2160

(Merrylands is near Parramatta, approximately 40 minutes from the CBD, and is easily accessible off the M4)

Ph: (02) 9633 5399

Fax: (02) 9633 5799

Email: gld@nswagtc.org.au

Office hours: 10 am – 1 pm, Mon-Fri
(during school terms only)

Gifted with Learning Disabilities

Why do some clever kids have ongoing difficulties with school?

Could your gifted child have a learning disability? Maybe you’re not sure?

Then read on...



NSW Association for Gifted & Talented Children

GLD Support Group

for parents, professionals and others concerned about children who are Gifted with Learning Disabilities

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