## **Video Transcript:** Academic perspective of high-ability students

## Academics Professor John Munro (Australian Catholic University) and Dr Leonie Kronborg (Monash University) discuss the unique characteristics of high-ability students, why some high-ability students underachieve and what teachers need to remember when working with this cohort of students.

JOHN: Some students particularly able at internalising information, and constructing knowledge from it, and they do that particularly rapidly, other students engage in actually generating new knowledge. They add new ideas to the teaching information. And they generate intuitive theories about what the teaching is all about.

LEONIE: It's being aware of the different characteristics the students have has that is indicating high general cognitive ability, so, processing and thinking about the learning experiences. And also thinking more specifically, how did those characteristics fit for the domains that you're actually trying to teach, but it's usually students who are at an advanced level compared to your more regular learners.

JOHN: These students often lack access to models who think about ideas in much the same way as they do, they're more likely to experience people telling them that their ideas are not appropriate that they don't fit, that they're really incorrect.

LEONIE: There's a problem for high ability students if they're not challenged in their learning, because often they may become quite perfectionistic. And because they think the aim of learning is about being perfect, where in fact, the aim of learning often is taking risks.

If teachers really like to control the learning all of the time, then high ability students may find it difficult to respond, because then they don't like being compliant. Another characteristic of high ability students, especially gifted students, is their independent learning and independent thinking.

JOHN: In order to achieve well, you have to be able to display the knowledge that is being used to assess that you are a high achiever. A lot of high ability students have difficulties using the window of opportunity that really requires them to be easily programmed. And what the window of opportunity is looking for is often a lower level of knowledge or level of knowledge. That is not where they are at. One key thing that schools can do is attempt to match how these students go about learning. And also to demonstrate an explicit valuing of what the students know how they learn, and how they go about interacting with the world.

LEONIE: They need to be aware of curriculum they need to be aware of the scope and sequence of curriculum that is available, but they also need to be challenged and given experiences where they're learning and can use their critical thinking teachers can build their creativity in their students gives opportunities for students to develop their creative and critical thinking.

The key strategy is being excited about teaching high ability students being able to differentiate in discussion by the questioning techniques that you use with the students. You can do it by varying the content, the process, the product, the learning environment, with our high ability students from prep through to year 12. Often just asking the students as a starting point, what do you really like to do in your spare time, can give insights to teachers of who are they really high ability students and what they're doing at home.

JOHN: If I've got a clear impression of what I want them to know, and to understand, in 15 or 20 minutes time, I'm then more able to include in my teaching of that content, cues and questions and probes that will encourage students to infer

LEONIE: I think it's most important for teachers to be aware when they're working have high ability students have the psychological needs of the students they're working with, that they are human beings first. And their academic achievement comes as an outcome.

JOHN: These students differ in how they know the world, and how they learn and how they interact with it in particular ways. If I as a teacher can start to see these ways. If I can tap into how these students know how they think, then I'm more able to really accommodate these students, and I can help them feel as if they're making optimal progress with me.

Learning about their unique interpretations of the world, learning about how they're taking the teaching information that I'm providing and converting it to knowledge in their minds.

LEONIE: What's been most rewarding for me is watching the development of their highly able students, where you actually see them realise their potential into areas of competence and often achievement where they are able to realise their dreams.

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