SHARPENING FOCUS – DISCOVERING BRILLIANCE

WHO ARE HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS?
Discover and understand their needs and hear what matters to them.
WHO ARE YOUR HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS?

Embrace the empathy imperative and get to know your high potential learners. Learn how to:
- engage in ethnographic style research
- create learner profiles
- analyse your collection of learner profiles

MEET SOME HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS

- Engage with a collection of learner profiles from schools that were part of the ELEVATE program
- Who do they remind you of in your context?
- Ideas to get your colleagues involved

These cards are part of the AISNSW ELEVATE INSIGHTS Series and complement the second publication: *Sharpening Focus – Discovering Brilliance*.

We encourage you to engage with the series of publications and to share these open resources widely within your network.

For further information please contact Sharon Cheers, Head: School Innovation, AISNSW at scheers@aisnsw.edu.au
Who are your high potential learners?

Sharpen your focus and discover their brilliance.
When you think about your context, who do you suspect might be:

- High potential but coasting?
- High performing and playing the game of school?
- High potential but flying under the radar?
- High potential but with something else going on – low motivation, learning disability, skill gap?
- High potential but not yet engaged or appropriately challenged by learning?
- High achieving yet with more possibility?
- High potential with inconsistent achievement and engagement?
- A student of mystery?

The learners who come to mind provide a great starting point for you to create high potential learner profiles and explore ethnographic research techniques to better understand students’ aspirations, experience and unmet needs.
EMBRACE THE EMPATHY IMPERATIVE

Ethnography, a user-centred research method, is the study and recording of people through observation and immersion. Closely associated with academic anthropology this approach is used in many different fields that embrace human centred design methods, including product and service design.

Through ethnography, each and every ELEVATE school team gained a more accurate understanding of their own students and what makes them ‘tick’.

The ethnographic research approach was designed to take the school teams far beyond the abundance of assessment data and standardised information which is valuable, but perhaps insufficient, to capture the complexity of what matters for specific learners.

The goal is to understand the learners at your school as objectively as possible and without assuming what they are like. We know everyone’s life is different so we want to uncover some common messages, challenges and opportunities that are hiding beneath the surface. This will help us to understand what could really raise the achievement of high potential learners.
TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

It’s all about listening
The purpose is to understand and record. It is not to offer solutions or make judgements. The suggested questions help you structure and guide the conversation. The aim is to understand deeply and have an open exploratory conversation that should flow rather than be a series of questions.

Prepare for your interview in advance
During the interview you may wish to invite your interviewee to record some details themselves and the conversation can be directed by them. Be aware of your time and their time.

Make sure people feel comfortable
It should occur in the participant’s environment eg. their preferred lunch spot in the playground or their home room.

Keep them informed
Share why their perspective is important and what you will do with this information. Make it clear why you value their insights.

Analyse your material soon after the interview
Consider additional immersive learning opportunities such as shadowing learners to observe the nature of learning and engagement throughout a day.

Remember you are trying to uncover further insights and embrace the complexity of the learner so you can learn what makes them thrive!
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS

Some suggestions to get started

ABOUT YOU

- Name and class?
- Favourite TV shows?
- What’s your catch phrase? (What do you say all the time?)
- What are your friends like?
- What do you like to do on the weekend?
- What do you dream of for the future?
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS

Some suggestions to get started

YOUR NETWORK

That’s you in the middle.
In the smallest circle, map the people you feel closest to, then work out from there. You might want to think about family, friends, classmates, teachers, clubs, groups etc.
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS

Some suggestions to get started

SIGNIFICANT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Think about a time when you had the biggest learning experience of your life...

- What was your most significant learning experience? (It could be at school or out of school.)
- Who was involved?
- What happened?
- Where was it?
- Why was it significant?
GETTING TO KNOW YOUR HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS

Some suggestions to get started

ABOUT SCHOOL

What are the biggest crazes at school? What does everyone do to be cool?
What does it mean to be good at school?
What kinds of things are you good at that are not at school?
What do your parents think of what you do at school?
What do your friends think of what you do at school?
What do teachers think of you at school?
What helps you to succeed? (It could be certain environments, with people, alone, etc.)

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE?

If you could change one thing at school to help you learn, what would it be?
After your exploratory conversation with a high potential learner create a profile of them. Record a narrative to capture the insights and personality of the learner. By embracing the empathy imperative, what have you discovered about the learner?

Capture what you have uncovered about their:
- learning level and potential
- talents and qualities
- feelings and attitudes
- behaviours
- what adults and peers think

Over the page is a resource for analysing your research.
In groups examine your collection of learner profiles. Each person listens as the learner is introduced – use post it notes to identify the challenges, opportunities, insights, needs and school/system challenges. Look at your analysis, what patterns emerge?

**CHALLENGES**
Challenges that learners face
- What makes things difficult?
- What are the problems they are trying to solve in their lives?
- What are the problems they would like solved for them?

**OPPORTUNITIES**
Opportunities for something that is better
- What positive dynamics could be built on or generalised?
- What is working well?
- What drives positive change?

**INSIGHTS**
Insights that give us a deeper understanding or new perspective
- What challenges our assumptions?
- What gives us a clue towards a different kind of understanding?
- What gives us confidence that we have found something significant?

**NEEDS**
Needs of learners
- What do people say they need?
- What do we think they need?
- What are the fundamental needs underpinning behaviour?

**SCHOOL/SYSTEM CHALLENGES**
Challenges within the system for positive change
- What processes, cultures, management or curriculum structures, etc make it difficult to make a positive impact?
- What are the barriers to change?
Meet some high potential learners
We invite you to engage with the following learner profiles. They are examples of how schools within the ELEVATE program captured the essence of their high potential learners which were used to guide their innovation efforts to redesign practice.

Each one of these learners had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their own school context.

Who do they remind you of in your context?
GET YOUR COLLEAGUES INVOLVED

Pick one learner profile that catches your eye.

Read the profile and then introduce the learner to people in your group.

Try to bring the young person to life by hearing their voice underneath the information.

As you listen to the learners being introduced take note of their challenges, opportunities, insights, needs and the system or school challenges they are seeking to overcome.

What would be the enablers and barriers to learning for your chosen young person?
GET YOUR COLLEAGUES INVOLVED

If this learner was in your care, what are the promising practices that would enable them to thrive?

What are you doing at a personal level to identify and challenge learners?

What school practices are promising and are challenging and supporting high potential learners?

What school practices could be amplified for greater impact?

What challenge questions emerge from your group?

HOW MIGHT WE....?
Ava, 6

Ava is a lively and happy student who regularly shows behaviour that is non-compliant. She often gets notes in her diary from her teachers when she’s cheeky, and she feels sad when her parents see the notes.

Ava believes that a good student is someone who listens well and has neat handwriting. Whilst she says she has neat handwriting, she feels she’s not a good listener.

She loves hands-on tasks eg. playdoh, and going outside to learn. Ava also thinks that holding her breath helps her to think. Mathematics is an area that Ava feels good about but finds that she’s not that good at reading because “I can’t read tricky words”.

Meeting new people makes Ava worry and she gets nervous and has butterflies in her tummy. She feels she doesn’t make friends easily. Her kindergarten friends are Eve and Zoe and they like to hide and pretend they are different things so the teacher doesn’t find them. “We run and we hide because we don’t want to pack up. Other teachers find us and then we have to pack up.”

She doesn’t like doing her sight words and reading homework because she thinks it’s boring and too easy.

Ava loves Mary Poppins and getting stamps when she is good. She wants to be a police officer when she grows up so she can save people.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
At level expected for end of kindergarten
Not performing at expected level in Mathematics

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Bilingual – Portuguese and English
Plays chess
Once comfortable, displays strong speaking skills

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
High energy
Struggles to concentrate
At times, appears to lack remorse
Often feels nervous, especially when meeting new people
Lacks self regulation

BEHAVIOURS
Non compliant
Impulsive
Often disruptive and off task
Strong willed
Very aware of when she is being cheeky with her peers
Hides
Refuses to cooperate when being assessed

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Not understood by teachers
Viewed as defiant
Appears that nothing phases her
Peers think she is naughty and cheeky
Parents get angry about notes in her diary

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Marco, 6

Marco is the eldest of two boys with a brother who is two years younger. They are very close and his family are always engaging in activities together which opens his eyes up to a variety of contexts e.g. city excursions, the Mint in Canberra. These situations stimulate discussions and engage him in experiences that are clearly linked to the real world.

When playing in a group of children, Marco usually chooses to play with a girl who is a few years older than he is. He prefers structured play with rules and can get quite frustrated if these rules aren’t followed. Sometimes this makes it difficult to enjoy the company of younger boys, except for his younger brother.

Family is very important to Marco and he has some good adult role models and cousins, whom the family visits throughout the year. Marco is very close to his father. They have similar interests and spend lots of time talking about numbers, space and physics.

Marco feels secure when he has established positive relationships. He has a strong desire to spend time with adults.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Highly motivated and engaged in differentiated learning
Likes to relate learning to real life
Works in the top group for literacy and numeracy
Becomes interested in a topic and learns everything he can about it for 3–6 months

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Extremely focused and enthusiastic with maths and numbers
Reading
Music – he can play some Beatles music without music in front of him
Persistent with skills that challenge him e.g. puts a lot of effort into sport even though he finds it difficult

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Finds it difficult when his day or routine changes
Is constantly looking for security from people around him, particularly adults
Loves to engage in inquiry learning
Often asks questions about what is coming up next in his day

BEHAVIOURS
Likes to please other people
Enjoys learning with peers
Has a high sense of justice
Can sometimes be like a policeman in the classroom with newly established rules
Always wants to know more

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Affectionate, excellent memory and an amazing vocabulary
At home he shows a lot of empathy and is aware of other people’s feelings. At school he is developing these skills, especially when his peers don’t understand something he finds easy

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Dylan, 7

Dylan is an eager and active student who loves to continually learn. He is a very confident class member and interacts very easily with all the other students. Dylan particularly excels in Mathematics.

Dylan believes that teachers at school see him as being smart and helpful. He thinks his parents believe that what he is learning at school is “important stuff”. Dylan believes to be good at school you need to be smart, help other children and listen carefully.

Dylan has a large group of friends at school and is very well-liked. The people that he feels closest to though are various family members, particularly his mum.

Dylan dreams of getting a good job when he is older so he can have a big house and nice car. He sees that in order for that to happen, he needs to complete university. He doesn’t have a particular career in mind yet.

Dylan thinks he works best in a quiet environment but with people nearby. He would like harder school work and to be able to use an iPad in class.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Excels in Mathematics
Consistently achieves good results
Good all rounder
Motivated by areas of interest
Easily learns new concepts and ideas

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Independent learner
Sociable
Enjoys both academic and sporting pursuits
Strong sense of family relationships

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Confident worker
Uninhibited by peer perceptions
Keen for harder school work
Tends to rush work to complete tasks

BEHAVIOURS
Can get loud and excitable easily
Talkative at times
Will put effort into school work that is within his area of interest
A good problem solver
Kind to his friends
Competitive in sport and Mathematics

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Well-liked by his teachers
Well-liked by his peers
Seen as smart by his peers
Will respond to teacher correction

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Caleb, 8

Caleb is an energised, creative and curious eight year old who defines himself as a “prodigy”. His passions are science, engineering, mechanics, coding and design. He also loves snow skiing and playing the violin. While Caleb believes he is perceived as “cool” among his peers due to his intellectual superiority, he identifies his social network as mostly adults.

Caleb’s teacher refers to him as “the absent minded professor”, a term he believes is fitting, admitting to being distracted by his own designs and creations. While a high achieving student, he is considered a difficult child who can be disruptive, demanding and even disrespectful. Interestingly, Caleb believes “a good student” is someone who allows ease of teaching, so he is learning not to be amused by friends or contribute as often to class discussions.

Caleb dreams of making the world sustainable, and enjoys participating in the sustainability club. He believes science holds the answers to him achieving his dream and sees mathematics as the language of science.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
High achiever in most areas
Lack of precision is holding his marks back in literacy

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Strong scientific knowledge
Self motivated
Confident
Creative and musical
Learns quickly
Makes connections between his learning and the world
Exuberant
Curious
Highly observant

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Excited by learning
High regard for self
Passionate about learning
Concerned for the world globally
Connects with older students and adults better than same age peers

BEHAVIOURS
Independent
Disruptive and outspoken
Creative and innovative
Demands attention
Opinionated
Philosophical and reflective
Excitable and curious

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Parents see his thirst for knowledge and nurture this
Some peers are in awe of him
Others find him annoying and patronising
Teachers find his intelligence fascinating and his demands challenging

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

ELEVATE
AGILE DESIGN FOR HIGH POTENTIAL LEARNERS
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Samira is an articulate and confident young girl. She is very active and enjoys playing netball on weekends, particularly goal shooting. She really likes it when they win and she has played well. Samira also likes nature and often goes for walks in the local bush. She is a member of the school nature club and enjoys this activity especially because her friends are now in the same group.

Samira’s favourite home activities are computer games especially ‘Talking Tom Goldrush’ and ‘My Talking Angel’.

Both of these games have problem solving components, instant feedback and instant rewards. She also likes real problem solving activities and likes to go geocaching during bush walks.

One of her favourite activities is playing maths games against Chris (he is the best mathematician in the class). She loves it when she beats him.

Samira thinks that her parents and her teacher believe she could work harder. Samira also believes she could work harder. She tends to rush her work. She says that she often finds the work easy especially Mathematics, reading and writing.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Strong in writing, reading and Mathematics
Achieves sound but not outstanding results

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Confident and sociable
Highly active and sporty
Loves problem solving activities

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Doesn’t feel challenged
Complacent
Dependent on the teacher for motivation and engagement

BEHAVIOURS
Enjoys being successful
Reluctant to seek challenge
Chooses safe activities

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Puzzles teachers due to lack of engagement
Supported by her parents

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Will, 9

Will is a student who enjoys playing games, doing homework, completing chores and watching TV on the weekend. He loves looking at pictures on the internet and seeing if he can replicate them. Will loves drawing because he likes how a drawing can show emotions. “Drawings show a person’s individual perspective. What you may think is happy may not be what someone else thinks of as happy. An example of this is how people have different perspectives of rain.”

Will has two close friends who are also high achievers. He says they are friendly and reliable. He also has many other friends and is very sociable.

Will has had three years of intensive ESL support. For the first three years of schooling he was learning the language and how to communicate in a variety of contexts. This year he has started to fully engage in the curriculum and has achieved at a high standard.

Will likes school and school suits the way he learns. He enjoys doing tests and gets good results that make him and his parents proud. He is self driven and also driven by his parents. When he grows up he wants to be a doctor, dentist or heart surgeon because his mum thinks he is good at fixing things.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Self-motivated and wants to achieve at a high level
His sister teaches him many things and he is able to complete his homework independently
Likes a structured classroom

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Hard working and tries very hard to do the best he can
High ability to use abstract reasoning
He is currently in Grade 5 for piano and Grade 3 for violin

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Would like if teachers told him more ways to solve things
Goes to language school on the weekends and thinks it is boring because it is all about revision
Would prefer to sit at desks and not waste time moving to the floor at different times

BEHAVIOURS
Very motivated and engaged in class
Compliant and honest
Mature for his age
If he doesn’t understand something and it is a difficult word, he goes home to look it up in the dictionary
Doesn’t do much sport

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Friends think he is funny and interesting
Some friends don’t understand him as he knows more than them
Teachers think that he is good at computers, very motivated to learn and engages in each task

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
James, 10

James was born in England, but moved to Australia with his family when he was three. An only child, James’ parents have high expectations of him and want him to do very well at school. James wants to be an architect when he is older.

James gets maths tutoring on a Monday— he finds it hard, but likes it, mainly as he has a “nice” person as a tutor. His parents are proud of him academically.

James considers himself bright, and he realises this is in part because he works hard at his learning. He also likes to stay physically active.

James likes to skate with his friends, play soccer and indoor hockey, the last two he does with sporting associations outside of school.

James’ friendship circle seems to mostly be friends outside of school, such as the kids in his street. At school they are mostly the girls in his class.

James prefers to work quietly, and likes learning using iPads or computers. He also enjoys collaboration, such as his recent participation in ‘Tournament of the Minds’.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
James registered as one of the brightest boys in his year (top 3) in NAPLAN results in both Year 3 and Year 5
James does not naturally push himself but he does love the challenge of trying

TALENTS & QUALITIES
James is a capable student academically, but also does enjoy sports. While not a ‘standout’ he does enjoy hockey and soccer
His parents make him learn guitar, but he will stop this as soon as he is allowed to

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
James likes the structure of school and enjoys it
At school James prefers to work quietly, and sometimes he thinks the work is under challenging
Sometimes James is bored

BEHAVIOURS
James is a quiet and compliant student. He will not push himself to his best without some external motivation such as the teacher, but will complete all required work

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
James is not as socially mature as some in his year
As a result he can cause issues in class by saying things that are not helpful

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
In her spare time Maria enjoys spending time with her siblings. They play games in the back yard and enjoy board games like Scrabble and Monopoly. She enjoys going to the movies to see the latest action movie.

Maria has a small group of friends who are funny, comforting, enthusiastic, energetic and optimistic. They are very supportive of her yet constantly remark how she does things differently.

Her parents excelled at school and are very interested in what and how well she does. They like her to do well and are very happy with her current school and the subjects available.

Maria thinks being a good student means achieving your goals. “These are different for everyone but if you do your best, have fun and meet lots of people then you are doing well.”

She also thinks that in order to be cool at school, “you need to be invited to lots of parties, dress fashionably, sit with the popular group, even if you don’t like them, and have the latest phone/watch etc.”

She enjoys working by herself with a variety of digital and non-digital resources available.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
A high achiever across the board but doesn’t stand out in the crowd
Flies just under the radar

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Happy to help others
Enjoys creating music and new games
Humorous

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Pressure to be popular
Self-confident and optimistic
Shows tolerance and respect for others’ abilities
Feels different from friends
Gets the “game of school”

BEHAVIOURS
Resilient
Seeks teacher approval
Willing to help others
Persistent
Motivated
Kind

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Liked by teachers
Accepted by peers
Peers think she’s smart
Encouraged by parents
Underestimated by teachers and peers

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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David, 11

David is in Year 5 and has been identified as a gifted student, twice exceptional. He enjoys the challenges and opportunities of school. David needs extension/enrichment activities that emphasise enquiry approaches, whilst receiving specific support in areas where he experiences gaps and challenges.

David’s teacher gives him time to compose his thoughts and opinions on concepts in order for David to display his understanding. When a challenge is set for him, David strives to reach the final outcome and does not give up. His classroom teacher provides David with opportunities for him to use his creativity and imagination, whilst providing him with alternative ways of demonstrating his understanding in classroom activities and assessment tasks.

David is involved in a range of activities before and after school, such as music, maths and code club. He plays soccer, enjoys reading books from a wide range of genres, playing on his Xbox/iPad and spending time with his family. He enjoys coding with his father and also looking after his chickens.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LEARNING LEVEL &amp; POTENTIAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>TALENTS &amp; QUALITIES</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal diagnosis of twice exceptional, with an IQ in the superior range</td>
<td>Particular strength in Mathematics and Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has received additional sensory input strategies to assist with attention</td>
<td>Very capable with all elements of IT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Particularly capable with coding</td>
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<th><strong>FEELINGS &amp; ATTITUDES</strong></th>
<th><strong>BEHAVIOURS</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Very insightful about the pressure he feels to be like his peers but is comfortable with who he is</td>
<td>Has experienced social and emotional difficulties in connecting with his peer group</td>
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<td>In the past, he has experienced teasing due to his intelligence but understands how his peers might feel about his abilities</td>
<td>David is self-aware</td>
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<td></td>
<td>He identifies attentional issues in himself, and is trying to self-regulate during class</td>
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<th><strong>ADULT &amp; PEER PERCEPTIONS</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Seen by his teachers as quiet and unique, but sometimes inattentive or disinterested</td>
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<td>Genuine engagement leads to a good level of concentration</td>
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<td>Has a strong sense of justice</td>
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This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Van, 11

Van is enthusiastic and eager to be involved in a number of activities. He is a keen sportsman and achieves consistently high results in all subjects.

Helping others is a passion of Van’s and he regularly takes on both formal and informal leadership roles to assist him with this.

Whilst he recognises that other students may be concerned with having the latest materialistic things, Van is driven by doing his best in all areas and ensuring that all tasks are completed on time.

Van is very close with his family and is able to get help from them when needed.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Consistently high achiever in all subjects
Regional champion for spelling
Sound athletic ability

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Excellent speller
Self-motivated
Eager to help others
Very punctual and self-regulated
Confident public speaker

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Thrives on helping others
Happiest when working towards a goal
Ambitious
Energetic
Very respectful

BEHAVIOURS
Very eager to please and can be constrained at times as a result of this
Strongly self-directed
Seeks constructive feedback

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Recognised by adults and peers as a leader
Respected by adults
Can be seen as the teacher’s pet by a minority of students
Supportive friendship group

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Flynn, 12

“Me and my mates are pretty silly at school. We just love to muck around, talk in class and be stupid. Next term I will have to settle down and start taking it more seriously ....... I have been saying that for a while.”

“I really enjoy cooking and have taught myself to cook all sorts of things. At home, I often cook. Sometimes I even cook dinner for the whole family. Mainly I like cooking desserts. At school when we do cooking, it’s all stuff that I already know. Once it took the teacher half an hour to teach us how to crack an egg. That’s good for some kids but no one ever asks you if you can already do something and they just spend time teaching you stuff you already know.”

“All my mates do lots of work at home; cleaning, washing, helping out. If your parents ask you to do something – you do it. If a teacher asks you - you don’t. The difference is you like your parents.”

“School would be better if the teachers were more fun, if they liked me and if they could see the good in everything. The kids need to feel that they should do the right things but then shouldn’t be stressed. In some classes I have given up on learning and I just try to stay out of trouble.”
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Likes to be given time and support to learn
Often disengaged
Engages when interested or can see the relevance
Doesn’t take school seriously

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Self-taught cooking skills
Good at many sports - soccer, touch football, swimming and running

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
 Doesn’t need to please people, especially teachers
 Doesn’t think about the future yet
 Gets stressed by things at school such as how teachers speak to him and detention
 Feels teachers do not understand him and is worried by this

BEHAVIOURS
Often in trouble at school
Gets in trouble for behaviour that is not appropriate in a classroom
Behaviour at home is good

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Mates sometimes think he takes things too far
Not well-liked by teachers
Teachers think he is naughty
Parents think he is well behaved - they are unaware of the amount of trouble he gets into at school

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Milly was identified as being “highly gifted” when she was seven. However, her academic performance has been consistently average and her true potential is not often demonstrated. Her teachers have questioned her ability as she finds it difficult to engage and produce work to the expected standard.

Milly’s parents separated a short time ago which has had an impact on her focus. Milly lives with a grandparent, mother and sibling and spends time with her father on weekends and holidays. She has received support via the school counsellor and mainly expresses concerns about friendships rather than family.

When Milly is interested she will spend copious amounts of time on a project and will proudly share her work. Other times her work is misplaced or left incomplete. Milly is highly involved in the co-curricular activities within the school.

This year she has participated in weekend sport, choir, drumming, dancing, service leadership, and the gaming and coding club. She was vice class captain and a passionate member of the student council. She took this role seriously, actively finding ways to represent student voice and make positive changes. She has a strong sense of social justice.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Achieving sound to high results in most subjects on her report
Not working to potential in classwork
Loves passion projects, particularly those with social justice angle

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Flourishes when provided with leadership opportunity
Very fair and honest
Trustworthy and insightful
High levels of emotional intelligence
Good musically, especially in reading music but can be reluctant
Mature sense of humour
Strong sense of justice

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Not excited about school subjects
Loves co-curricular and responsibility
Anxious when not in control
Frustrated
Can be very emotional and cry with joy and sorrow

BEHAVIOURS
Loves helping others - gets distracted and will help others rather than complete her own work
Easily distracted/very difficult to organise
Can become incredibly anxious and can throw childlike tantrums when stressed
Can challenge teachers

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Seen as bossy
Described as difficult to warm to
Efficient
Organised when interested, disorganised when not interested
Clever
Strong willed
Can be non compliant

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
“I have friends, they are funny and nice but they are not like me. They play football and watch M-rated movies. I cry in PG movies. I feel like I am in the movie. I know I am different and I accept it, but it is still awkward and hard.”

“I find the classroom is challenging but the work is easy. I have so many ideas going on in my head. I am passionate, creative and have a scientific mind, but I have to spend most of my energy doing all this “normal stuff” that I am no good at.”

“I love trying things out and seeing if they work. I want opportunities to put my ideas into action. I need someone to structure and guide me, but I don’t need someone to tell me things. When I want to know something I read it. Books are full of proven facts and amazing ideas and we get hardly any time to read.”

“I once went on a family holiday to Mount Kosciuszko National Park and I saw the Hydro Electric Dam and Power Station. I was so excited. That’s what I’m interested in - how it all works, how they built it, how they got through all that rugged terrain and forest.”

“I also need down time. The noise level sometimes get distracting and I get so tired. I would change the lengths of the breaks and make them shorter and give everyone more time to read.”
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Capable of imagining whole new worlds
Wants to create a holographic lab where you can grab and inspect things. A bit like a computer, but you could really look into things with it
He would also use it to cheat at Maths

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Working things out for himself
Reading
Minecraft
Making and imaging new worlds

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Thinks everyone at school is pretty nice but doesn’t really get them
Can be inflexible
Tries hard to fit into the way of doing things
Often gets told what to do but doesn’t always agree with it
Thinks other students don’t think much of him

BEHAVIOURS
Can get overexcited
Talks a lot about things that others don’t think are interesting or important but they are to Sam
Does what he is told but doesn’t always like it or agree

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Peers can find him inflexible and get impatient with him
Parents think he is doing okay at school
Teachers think he is enthusiastic

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Derrick, 13

Derrick lives with his parents and sister. His parents work long hours and often weekends. Most of his spare time is dedicated to gaming and his close friends also follow this interest.

His favourite subjects are Mathematics and Music where the teachers know him and check on his progress regularly. Derrick prefers a quiet classroom as he can’t work with lots of noise.

Moving out of the Honours English class has highlighted to him how much he prefers that class. In his current class teachers don’t have the time to cater for everyone’s questions as there are different levels of students. “Some students don’t understand as quickly as you do. It is better to be at the bottom of the higher class because you learn more.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING LEVEL &amp; POTENTIAL</th>
<th>TALENTS &amp; QUALITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong in Mathematics</td>
<td>Quiet, reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keen interest in Science, in particular Biology</td>
<td>Strong interest in music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for high performance across subjects</td>
<td>Prefers small classes with students who hold similar interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding performance in public speaking</td>
<td>Is able to present his ideas in a clear and engaging way when he is confident with what he is discussing</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELINGS &amp; ATTITUDES</th>
<th>BEHAVIOURS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys all subjects except Sport</td>
<td>Very particular in the types of people he likes to collaborate with and complete group tasks. He prefers to select the group members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wants to do well at school and become a surgeon or work in the computer industry</td>
<td>Limited self-motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finds it easier to make friends online as opposed to in person at school</td>
<td>Relies on teacher to guide and deliver the learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very sedentary</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADULT &amp; PEER PERCEPTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of organisation and self-motivation hinders his learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefers groups of similar ability - flounders when peers are too far ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers see him as not caring about school and often comment that he is constantly late to class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Vera, 13

Vera is a diligent, friendly and mature young person. She has a small, close-knit group of school friends who all share her love of anime. She rarely goes out on weekends, preferring instead to spend time with family or play SimsFreePlay on her mobile phone.

Vera and her family emigrated five years ago; she lives with her grandmother, parents and three younger siblings. She shares a room and often helps her two sisters – both of whom are similarly studious – while her three year old brother was recently treated for a heart condition. Vera’s father practiced as a medical practitioner overseas and encourages effort and a humble attitude; it is hoped that she will secure a scholarship to university.

Vera considers herself to be naturally smart and gains significant self-worth from her academic achievements. Compared to her previous school, she prefers the more relaxed and fun style of Australian classrooms although she is often bored in class as she waits for other students to catch up.

She will be moving into the selective class in Year 8 though is anxious about the increased competition. She worries that she will fail herself and everyone else if she doesn’t come first.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
An academic all-rounder
Top results across English and Mathematics
Has the potential to excel in many fields

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Exceptionally organised
Self-motivated
Highly academic
Conceptual thinker
Strong sense of morals and duty
Empathetic and generous

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Values family and education
Excited about learning
Bored if lessons don’t challenge her
Fears failure
Very self-critical
Prefers independent work as doesn’t like relying on others in group work
Doesn’t like performing - prefers written assessments

BEHAVIOURS
Completes chores at home and helps with younger siblings
Highly self-motivated
Enjoys imaginative experiences
Works independently
Strong connection to Christian faith
Prone to anxiety if challenged with fierce competition

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Viewed as mature and conscientious
Seen as smartest in her class
Parents are supportive although encourage humility

This learner has revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Charlotte, 14

Charlotte is a creative student with many and varied interests. She enjoys games of strategy that make her think, playing with technology, talking with friends, science, comedy, drawing, singing and acting. Because her family moved around, Charlotte has many friends around the world. She also has many and varied friendship groups – she likes to mix with people with “niche interests”, as well as the popular groups.

In the classroom, Charlotte loves to participate in discussions rather than simply listen. She has been diagnosed with and receives support for ADHD and weak executive function (organisational skills). She recognises that she does not always finish her work on time and prefers tasks that are set for completion during class. She would like to choose when she receives support and does not like imposed solutions. Charlotte finds drawing in class helps her to concentrate and stops her mind from wandering. However, she recognises that this may not help her with study. Charlotte likes to be competitive and enjoys the logical, sequential nature of Mathematics and Commerce. She would say working with technology and skills in thinking, investigation and discussion are particular strengths.

In the future, she would like a high paying job. Charlotte has ambitious dreams of being a corporate lawyer, due to her love of Commerce, personal interest in reading laws and skills at making an argument. Alternatively, she may start her own technology business.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL

Very superior range for verbal, comprehension and perceptual reasoning
Low Average Working Memory and Processing Speed
ADHD
Inattentive and Clinically Significant Executive Function Difficulties

TALENTS & QUALITIES

Creative
Very high verbal communication skills
Sense of humour
Divergent thinker
Problem-solver

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES

Confident
Likes variety in friendships
Wants to be understood by her teachers
Desires respect for her ideas
Wants to be included in decisions
“To be good at school means getting good grades – that is what it means to succeed”

BEHAVIOURS

Likes to talk and discuss
Disorganised and does not complete take-home work
Draws in class, rather than taking notes

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS

Friends think she is often “messing around” rather than working
Her teachers say she is competitive but disorganised and does not complete her work
Parents are not sure how Charlotte is going at present.

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Eli is a reclusive student. He likes the anonymity of the online world because he is constantly bullied in the real world. At school, he is described as academically gifted but also “anti-social” and “obsessive”. Eli describes his relationships with other students as “unnecessary”; however, he identifies the need to make relationships with his teachers because they can assist him achieve the academic results he requires. He also feels teachers are at the same “level of intelligence” as himself.

He would like to have more autonomy over his learning in terms of choosing subjects and assessments. He would like all tasks to be differentiated and with no collaborative elements. Eli finds it easiest to learn alone and “hates” group work. He believes others expect him to carry them and get them the best marks. Eli acknowledges that teachers in subjects that do not interest him, such as languages, find him difficult, argumentative and apathetic. He also says some students and teachers may find him openly confrontational.

Eli prefers to discuss content and facts, rather than write about ideas or analyse information from different perspectives. He loves to read many books or articles about things that interest him. He loves to memorise this material. Eli says he enjoys discussion and debate because he can win any argument. Whilst he is unsure of his future path, Eli believes he will work in academia.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Achieves to a high level in subjects that interest him

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Exceptional memory for facts
Highly articulate
Computer gamer

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Considers school is a stepping stone to university and future success
Anxious about social situations
Quick to anger, if he feels confronted or challenged

BEHAVIOURS
Reclusive and refuses to interact or participate in work/assessments that he deems irrelevant
Controlling in classroom and playground
Constantly correcting teachers and peers

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Teachers are polarised in the view of Eli – some see him as an immature but charming twice exceptional, gifted student – some are frustrated by his lack of motivation and disrespect for subjects or ideas that do not interest him
Teachers feel he is missing out on a “well-rounded education”

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Elisha, 14

In her spare time, Elisha watches science and history interest shows such as ‘Crash Course’. Elisha enjoys relaxing at the beach, catching up with her friends or spending time with her family.

Elisha has a small tight group of friends who are competitive in a friendly way which she sees as helping everyone do better. Her parents want her to do well. As they completed their schooling overseas, they take a keen interest in Elisha’s Australian experience.

Being a good student means trying hard, participating in class and doing well. In order to be cool at school, you need to play sport, be part of a big group and be extroverted.

She dreams of excelling in her chosen career, and making a difference by helping others. “My dad was educated in Kenya, so I have become interested in education as a way of helping those who don’t have the same opportunities I do.”
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL

Achieves top grades
All rounder
Excels in all fields

TALENTS & QUALITIES

Highly academic
Self-motivated

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES

Doesn’t feel stretched at school
Feels that work is not open-ended enough

BEHAVIOURS

Teacher pleaser
Does not like to put her hand up in class unless 100% sure of the answer
It is important to her what her teachers think of her

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS

High achiever
Competitive in a friendly way
Eager to learn and to do well
Naturally curious

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Yasmine, 14

Yasmine is a composed and studious young person with strong family bonds. She has a twin sister that she is very close to though they both have their own social groups. Her group of friends are tight knit and all high achievers. Yasmine rarely socialises outside of this group. She plays sport most weekends and is particularly good at tennis. She is an avid reader of popular fiction and enjoys watching movies. She is part of the school’s coding club because she thought it might be something different and interesting though she doesn’t play computer games. Yasmine has made the decision not to be involved in social media because she “doesn’t feel the need to be permanently connected”.

Her parents are very supportive of her school work and will often discuss upcoming tasks and assignments with her. They encourage her to remain focused at school and save socialising for the weekends. She feels that if she didn’t do as well as she would have liked on a test they would encourage her to “work harder next time”.

Being good at school means getting good marks in tests and participating in class discussions. Yasmine enjoys “knowing the answers” and being someone who asks a lot of questions in class. Her own conscience would “haunt” her if she wasn’t doing the right thing in class.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Consistently high achieving
Classified as an ‘A’ student
Noted for the level at which she applies herself
All rounder

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Self-motivated
Highly academic
Caring and supportive of her friends
Enjoys challenging work that requires conceptual thought and new skills
Wants to “do something good” with her life which means something that satisfies her and contributes to the wider world

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Doesn’t feel challenged
Wants to learn things that are new and different
Likes being “taught stuff” rather than having to research

BEHAVIOURS
Friends all achieve but “don’t talk about school stuff that often”
Highly engaged and astute in class
Demonstrates aptitude by asking and answering questions
Doesn’t collaborate with peers
Studies side by side with her twin sister who is also highly academic, they push one another

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Described as talkative and kind by her friends
Seen by her peers as studious and someone who knows a lot

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Jacob, 15

Jacob is bright, intelligent and highly capable. He approaches school and learning with confidence. When he is engaged by a topic, Jacob is self-motivated and enjoys researching and learning something new. He enjoys problem solving but admits schools is “pretty easy” and “there is really only one teacher who challenges me”.

After school, Jacob is interested in a career in corporate finance. He enjoys, and is good at, both Mathematics and Commerce. In Commerce he made a significant profit in a sharemarket simulation game. He says this was “great, it was like real life ... not like other school subjects.”

Jacob has a good network of friends, mostly from school and his various sporting pursuits. He is a talented sports person, having played soccer at a high level. More recently he has begun cycling, triathlon and mountain biking. He loves getting outdoors, finding new trails and having “a bit of an adventure”.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Highly capable
An ‘A’ student in most subjects
Top results in Mathematics

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Self-motivated
Confident
Learns quickly
Talented sports person
Sociable
Perceptive
Good at problem solving

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Finds schools “pretty easy”
Knows he could do better
Acknowledges his ability in Mathematics
Egocentric
Complacent about school

BEHAVIOURS
Independent learner
A natural leader
Switches off in mundane activities
Can be complacent
Relates well to others

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Teachers and peers consider him a leader
Teachers recognise his potential and question his work ethic
Parents think he lacks diligence and find this frustrating
Good relationship with his sister but they “fight a lot”

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Karen, 15

Karen has a wide range of interests both in and outside of school. She is sociable and communicative, so many see her as an extrovert. However, she describes herself as an introvert. Karen is very close to her parents and immediate best friends.

Karen would like to have a career advocating for social justice causes as a film-maker.

Karen enjoys school but feels, at times, that the material could be delivered at a faster pace to meet her needs. She also feels that some of the learning content is not relevant. She would like more time at school to learn through her passions.

She often stays awake late at night working on her passions after finishing her school work.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Highly able
Achieves excellent results across all academic areas
Particularly strong in English, Visual Arts and the humanities
Mathematics and Science are areas of relative weakness

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Debating
Swimming
Film-making
Advocacy
Strong communicator
Introvert

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Compassionate
Self-aware
Optimistic
Appreciative
Passionate about animal rights

BEHAVIOURS
Stays awake late at night to work on passions
Conscientious
Hard-working
Independent
Organised

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Seen as very intelligent
Expected to achieve top marks in IB
Expected to choose a traditional study and career path post school
Admired by teacher and peers alike

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Ali, 16

Ali lives with his mum and his older brother who has finished Year 12. Ali’s dad lives elsewhere with his new wife and family. Ali’s older brother has an OK relationship with him but Ali does not. He has a challenging family environment and Ali is very aware of the financial stress within the family.

Ali enjoys Mathematics and most of his subjects which he says is because he likes his teachers and they spend time explaining things he doesn’t understand. The relationship he has with his teachers determines how much he learns.

Ali does not see himself as a good student. He acknowledges that he is better behaved now than when he was in Year 7 and 8. Even though he wasn’t at his best behaviour, Ali’s best learning was in middle school. There was a strong focus on wellbeing with fewer teachers supporting students to move into high school.

Ali is pretty sure he will leave school if he is offered an apprenticeship or traineeship. His mum would like him to complete Year 12.

Ali really enjoys the classes where the teacher makes the lesson interesting and practical. He is a hands-on learner.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL

- Diagnosed with ADHD
- Has difficulty concentrating
- Not achieving to potential
- Doesn’t study and doesn’t know how to study

TALENTS & QUALITIES

- Talented footballer
- Enjoys sport
- Takes responsibility for his errors
- Gets angry when blamed for something he did not do

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES

- Realises he has to do things differently but doesn’t know how
- Feels picked on by teachers because of how he behaved in the past
- Does not trust adults or people in authority

BEHAVIOURS

- Gives up easily and doesn’t persist
- Often deals with conflict through violence or being verbally abusive
- Has been involved in risk-taking behaviours outside school

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS

- Adults know he can be rude and disruptive
- He has challenging relationships with some teachers
- Compliant when in a trusting relationship

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Emma, 16

Emma describes herself as intelligent and reserved. She enjoys school and has chosen a broad range of subjects as she is unsure of what she will do in the future. She enjoys science subjects as well as Visual Arts and English. Her parents do not put much pressure on her to perform at school because they just want her to enjoy learning experiences and they think she already puts too much pressure on herself. Her mum is a teacher and her dad is an engineer and Emma describes them as also being quiet people.

Emma has a close group of friends, many of whom she has known since kindergarten. She really only studies with these friends and is more concerned with feeling comfortable in a room of students than stretching herself by collaborating with a student she does not know. She feels anxious if she walks into a room and does not know where to sit. For example, if two teachers have combined classes for team-teaching purposes.

Emma enjoys coming to school each day and wants to be engaged in the classroom. When she returns home each day she has set routine which involves tea and biscuits, followed by study in a quiet place in the house. She does not study in her bedroom as this is a place of sanctuary.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL

Achieves strong grades
Doesn’t draw attention to herself
Has the potential to excel in many fields

TALENTS & QUALITIES

Good at many sports including netball, swimming, dancing and ice skating
Supportive of friends and family
Self-motivated
Good at reading

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES

Tolerant and respectful of others
Feels safe and secure in close friendship group
Enjoys school
Sick of reading “is quiet” on her school report

BEHAVIOURS

Compliant
Predictable
Likes routine

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS

Teachers think she is quiet
Teachers think she is compliant
Parents think she puts too much pressure on herself

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Leah, 16

Leah is a quiet and reflective student who has had some significant changes in her life in the last four years. She has a close group of friends with whom she closely identifies due to her faith. Some of these are new friendships as a result of a life changing experience she had on a service trip in Year 9.

Leah has an intense dislike of social media and has “disengaged” from it. She felt that her and her friends could open up and talk through a screen, but when they met in person, had become devoid of basic human interactions and social skills. Since stopping “living in” the world of social media, Leah has started to see with clarity the value of meaningful relationships and where to find them.

Leah's parents are very proud of her academic achievements and are very supportive of her education. Leah also has a grandmother with whom she strongly identifies. She says her grandmother is an enormous source of strength and guidance in her life.

Leah believes to be a good student and popular means being outgoing, capable at sport and socially competent. She highlighted that the ability to make light of people and situations, helps one's social status.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Strengths lie in the humanities
Top results in many subjects
Capable and gifted writer

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Self-motivated
Talented artist
Academically driven
Unusual ability for abstract conceptual thought

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Confidence gained through relationships
  Self-accepting
  Reflective
  Deep thinker

BEHAVIOURS
Works at relationships
  Deeply reflective
Craves meaningful relationships
  Philosophical
  Thinks creatively

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Parents supportive, especially mum
  Not understood by teachers
  Seen as quiet and shy
  Historically viewed as resistant

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Eliza, 17

Eliza is a friendly girl who has a solid group of friends. She believes that all of her friends have similar goals of being focused on “real life” rather than the world of school.

Eliza feels that she is an “old soul” and she tends to use catch phrases that are from her family rather than modern phrases. She saw herself as an introvert when she was younger but over the last few years has started to enjoy going out more.

Eliza dreams of being content in the future. This means having a full time job, friends and a home. She doesn’t have clear goals about career in mind, she would just like a good job.

Eliza values learning experiences that are one-on-one or more practical in nature. She prefers learning by herself and in a flexible learning style. Her parents encourage her but realise that if they push Eliza to do more that she will react in a negative manner.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Consistently achieves sound results
Learning level does not match potential
Greater input could produce better result

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Organised and likes to be in charge
Good at English, especially creative writing
Highly loyal to friendship group
Reliable at looking after younger siblings

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Wants to be happy
Concerned that by focusing more on school work her mental health would suffer
Bored by the routine of school
Desires to be treated like an adult with flexible learning routines and structures
Resents being asked her opinion about something and then nothing changing

BEHAVIOURS
Unmotivated by school work
Compliant as long as not too much is asked of her
Prefers company of her friends
Goes with the flow
Lacks motivation and direction
Recognises consequences of her decisions
Likes learning at her own pace

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Strong friendship group
Intimidates teachers who sense her disengagement
Viewed as resistant and passive-aggressive
Believes teachers view her as easily distracted and needing focus
Parents view her as reliable at looking after siblings

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
Ellena, 17

Ellena is an independent person, who has a strong sense of social justice. She is extremely honest and demands this honesty from others. She has only a few trusted friends and finds social relationships in larger groups challenging.

Ellena loves music and uses it as an escape from the world. She plays the guitar and participates in a number of music ensembles at school. In the future Ellena wants to be a music therapist. She has been involved with both of these fields from an early age and feels it would be a good way to help others like her.

Ellena learns best from discussing concepts, allowing her to hear others’ opinions. She would love more time in school for her own discovery learning and requires silence when studying. Her favourite subjects are English and Music. She feels she is only an average student in all her subjects and that her teachers don’t really know her.

Ellena knows she needs to work harder at school but is often defeated by the fact that there is always so much content to learn and it feels like there is always someone smarter.
LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL
Is underachieving
Has potential to achieve in many subjects

TALENTS & QUALITIES
Strong sense of social justice
Independent and honest
Creative, imaginative individual
Talented musician

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES
Frustrated and defeated with learning in certain subjects
Uses creative pursuits as outlet and escapism

BEHAVIOURS
Finds social situations challenging
Highly sensitive with low self-esteem

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS
Parents are supportive
Not understood and sometimes feels ignored by teachers
Seen to be a smart aleck and resistant

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.

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Sophia, 17

Sophia is a confident student, who now regularly achieves at a high level inside and outside the classroom. Sophia recognises she is highly capable and admits she “coasted” through the middle years of high school. She struggled to engage with material which was not relevant to her life or did not lead to a tangible outcome, such as a grade; she says, “... I don’t know everything, but I know what I want/need to learn at this point”. Sophia links academic success to personal goals and gains motivation from the competitive aspect of school assessment. She enjoys the Humanities but resented the compulsory nature of Mathematics and Science in the junior years.

Sophia struggles to sit still in class and quickly becomes bored of work which does not interest her. She dislikes being in non-streamed classes and much prefers subjects which are slightly more self-directed and which enable extension quite easily, such as French. Sophia recognises structure and guidance are important in learning, but she would prefer more autonomy.

Sophia says she is motivated by a desire to “help people in need”. She is a keen member of the Cadet Unit. She is the first ever female leader of a recruit company of mainly Years 8/9 boys and relishes the challenge of leadership. Sophia recently won a grant worth a substantial amount of money to develop an app to connect people due to medical challenges. She is interested in joining the Army or pursuing a career “helping people”.

LEARNING LEVEL & POTENTIAL

- Highly capable
- Top student in Humanities subjects
- Works best when there is an obvious application of content in the “real world”

TALENTS & QUALITIES

- Excellent writer
- Confident communicator
- Leader with strong executive function skills
- Sets personal goals on a regular basis

FEELINGS & ATTITUDES

- Enjoys helping people
- Thrives on academic competition
- Learning engagement is closely linked to the teachers
- Preference for self-directed work

BEHAVIOURS

- Strong friendship circle
- Becomes bored and disengaged with subjects which are not personally relevant
- Seeks approval or recognition for her achievements

ADULT & PEER PERCEPTIONS

- Well liked by teachers, who see her as a highly capable and hard-working student
- Parents pressure her to work hard and want her to achieve high marks

This learner had revealed indications of high ability and relative underperformance in their school context.
We encourage you to engage with the series of publications and to share these open resources widely within your network.

For further information please contact Sharon Cheers, Head: School Innovation, AISNSW. scheers@aisnsw.edu.au