


GIFTED LEARNER SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT PACK

Grades 3–8



Addressing the Unique Social-Emotional Needs of Gifted Students

Perfectionism • Asynchronous Development • Intensity
Peer Relationships • Overexcitabilities

8 Lesson Plans • 20 Perfectionism Reframe Cards • Intensity Management Journal
Peer Relationship Discussion Protocol • Overexcitabilities Parent Explainer
Student Self-Assessment • Teacher Consultation Notes • Parent Communication Guide

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Introduction

How to Use This Resource

Gifted learners are often celebrated for their intellectual abilities, yet their social-emotional needs are frequently overlooked or misunderstood. Research consistently demonstrates that gifted students experience heightened emotional intensity, asynchronous development, perfectionism, and social challenges that require targeted support (Silverman, 2012; Daniels & Piechowski, 2009). This resource is designed to address those needs directly, providing educators with structured lessons, student activities, and parent communication tools specifically tailored for gifted learners in Grades 3 through 8.

What This Pack Includes

- **8 Comprehensive Lesson Plans** — Each targeting a specific social-emotional need: perfectionism, asynchronous development, emotional intensity, overexcitabilities, peer relationships, stress management, self-advocacy, and understanding giftedness.
- **20 Perfectionism Reframe Cards** — Ready-to-use cards that help students identify perfectionistic thinking and replace it with growth-oriented alternatives.
- **Intensity Management Journal** — A structured journal for students to track, understand, and develop strategies for managing emotional intensity.
- **Peer Relationship Discussion Protocol** — A framework for facilitating meaningful conversations about social challenges unique to gifted learners.
- **Overexcitabilities Explainer for Parents** — A clear, accessible guide to help parents understand and support their child's overexcitabilities at home.
- **Student Self-Assessment** — A reflective tool helping students identify their own social-emotional strengths and areas for growth.
- **Teacher Consultation Notes** — Structured templates for documenting observations, consultation meetings, and action plans.
- **Parent Communication Guide** — Templates and strategies for building effective home-school partnerships around gifted social-emotional development.

Research Foundation

This resource is grounded in several key frameworks and bodies of research:

- **Kazimierz Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration** — The foundational framework for understanding overexcitabilities and the developmental potential of gifted individuals.
- **Linda Silverman's Research on Giftedness** — Pioneering work on asynchronous development, visual-spatial learners, and the emotional complexity of gifted children.

- **Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset Research** — Evidence-based strategies for reframing perfectionism and building resilience through growth-oriented thinking.
- **Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon (2002)** — Comprehensive research on the social-emotional development of gifted children, including risk and protective factors.
- **Susan Daniels & Michael Piechowski** — *Living with Intensity*, providing practical approaches to supporting overexcitabilities in gifted learners.

Implementation Guidelines

This resource is designed for maximum flexibility. Consider the following as you implement:

- **Sequence Flexibility** — Lessons can be taught in any order based on student needs. Lesson 1 is recommended first to establish shared language.
- **Grade Adaptation** — Each lesson includes differentiation notes for Grades 3–5 and Grades 6–8. Adjust vocabulary, depth, and complexity accordingly.
- **Group Size** — Lessons work best with small groups (4–8 students) but can be adapted for whole-class or individual use.
- **Time Management** — Each lesson is designed for approximately 45–60 minutes. Some activities may extend across multiple sessions.
- **Creating Safety** — Gifted learners may feel vulnerable discussing social-emotional challenges. Establish clear norms of confidentiality, respect, and non-judgment.
- **Student Voice** — Encourage students to share their experiences. Gifted learners thrive when they feel heard and understood.

Equity & Inclusion

Important Note for Educators Giftedness exists across all racial, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic groups. Be mindful of cultural differences in how giftedness, emotional expression, and social interaction are manifested and valued. Ensure your identification and support practices are equitable and culturally responsive. Twice-exceptional (2e) learners — those who are gifted AND have a learning difference or disability — may present with unique profiles requiring additional consideration.

Section 1: Lesson Plans

The following eight lesson plans are designed to be facilitated by a school counselor, gifted education specialist, or classroom teacher. Each lesson follows a consistent structure: Opening, Core Activity, Closing, and Differentiation. Lessons include discussion prompts, student activities, and reflection opportunities.

LESSON 1

Understanding Giftedness: My Unique Brain

Focus: Self-Awareness & Identity

Objective:	Students will develop an understanding of giftedness as a unique way of thinking and feeling, and begin to build a positive identity as a gifted learner.
Time:	45–60 minutes
Grades:	3–8 (adapted for grade bands)
Materials:	Chart paper, markers, "My Unique Brain" worksheet (included), sticky notes, colored pencils

Opening Activity: "What Makes Your Brain Special?" (10 minutes)

Begin by asking students to think about how their brain works differently from other kids their age. Distribute sticky notes and ask each student to write down one thing that makes their brain "different" — this could be how fast they think, how deeply they feel, or how they notice things others don't. Have students place their sticky notes on chart paper. Read the notes aloud (anonymously) and discuss common themes.

Facilitator Tip: Some students may initially say "nothing" or feel reluctant to share. Normalize this by sharing examples: "Some gifted kids say they think really fast, or feel things really deeply, or get bored when things are too easy. What has your experience been?"

Core Activity: "The Gifted Brain" Interactive Discussion (20 minutes)

Using the talking points below, guide students through an interactive discussion about what it means to be gifted. Use chart paper to create a "Gifted Brain Map" as you go.

- **Fast Processing** — Your brain takes in and processes information quickly. This is a strength, but it can also mean you get frustrated when things move slowly.
- **Deep Thinking** — You tend to think about things more deeply and make connections that others might not see. This is sometimes called "complexity of thought."
- **Intense Feelings** — Many gifted learners experience emotions more intensely than their same-age peers. This is sometimes called "emotional overexcitability."

LESSON 5

Overexcitabilities: Understanding Your Superpowers

Focus: Overexcitabilities (OEs)

Objective:	Students will learn about Dabrowski's five overexcitabilities, identify their own OE profile, and understand how OEs are both a strength and a challenge.
Time:	55–60 minutes
Grades:	3–8 (adapted for grade bands)
Materials:	OE Profile Cards (included), "My OE Superpower" worksheet (included), chart paper, markers, highlighters

Opening Activity: "Superpower or Kryptonite?" (10 minutes)

Write several traits on chart paper (e.g., "Can't stop moving," "Notices tiny details," "Feels others' sadness," "Daydreams a lot," "Asks endless questions"). Have students vote with a thumbs-up if they think the trait is a superpower, or thumbs-down if it's a weakness (kryptonite). Debrief: Most of these traits are BOTH. They are superpowers when channeled well, and kryptonite when they overwhelm us.

Core Activity: The Five Overexcitabilities (20 minutes)

Introduce Kazimierz Dabrowski's concept of Overexcitabilities (OEs). Explain that OEs are heightened responses to stimuli—they make the world more vivid, intense, and complex. Present the five types:

OE Type	What It Looks Like	Superpower	Challenge
Psychomotor	Surplus of energy, rapid speech, fidgeting, need for movement	High stamina, enthusiasm, ability to act quickly	Can't sit still, seen as "hyper," driven to exhaustion
Sensual	Heightened sensory experience (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste)	Deep appreciation of art, music, beauty, and aesthetic pleasure	Easily overwhelmed by noise, textures, lights; sensory sensitivities
Intellectual	Intense curiosity, love of logic, voracious reading, asking deep questions	Passion for learning, problem-solving, and discovering truth	Can't stop thinking, over-analyzing, existential worry
Imaginational	Rich imagination, vivid dreams, love of fantasy, creative storytelling	Inventiveness, creativity, ability to envision new possibilities	Prefers fantasy to reality, blends truth and fiction, difficulty focusing
Emotional	Deep feelings, strong attachments, intense empathy, compassion	Profound connections with others, deep sense of justice, self-awareness	Extreme highs and lows, easily hurt, anxiety, difficulty regulating

Student Activity: "My OE Profile" (15 minutes)

Distribute the OE Profile Cards and the "My OE Superpower" worksheet. Students read through the profile cards and identify which 1–2 OEs they resonate with most strongly. On the worksheet, they will:

- Circle or highlight their top OEs.
- Write a real-life example of when that OE was a superpower for them.
- Write a real-life example of when that OE felt like a challenge.
- Brainstorm one strategy to manage the "challenge" side of their top OE.

Closing: "OE Connections" (5–10 minutes)

Have students stand in different corners of the room based on their dominant OE (or raise hands if movement isn't possible). Allow students to find their "OE peers" and briefly share one strategy they use. This builds community and shows students they are not alone in their intensities.

Differentiation

Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8
Use the OE table as a read-aloud and matching activity. Provide pre-written scenario cards that students sort into the five OE categories. Focus on identifying their own top OE.	Discuss how OEs interact (e.g., Intellectual + Emotional = existential anxiety). Introduce the concept that OEs are the "raw material" for advanced development (Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration). Have students write a reflective essay on how their OEs shape their identity.

Assessment Notes

Watch for students who identify with all five OEs equally—this is common in highly gifted learners. Ensure students don't use OEs as an excuse for behavior ("I can't help it, I have psychomotor OE") but rather as a framework for understanding and managing their needs. Students with strong Emotional OE paired with Intellectual OE may express existential concerns—be prepared to validate and support these deeper thoughts.

LESSON 8

Advocacy: Speaking Up for What You Need

Focus: Self-Advocacy & Empowerment

Objective:	Students will learn a structured self-advocacy framework, practice identifying their needs, and role-play advocating for themselves in academic and social-emotional contexts.
Time:	50–60 minutes
Grades:	3–8 (adapted for grade bands)
Materials:	"My Advocacy Script" worksheet (included), role-play scenario cards (included), chart paper, markers, journals

Opening Activity: "Fill in the Blank" (10 minutes)

Present the following scenarios and ask students to respond honestly (in writing or aloud):

- When the work is too easy, I usually _____.
- When I feel overwhelmed by my feelings, I usually _____.
- When I disagree with a teacher, I usually _____.
- When I need help but am afraid to ask, I usually _____.

Debrief: Many gifted learners either shut down, act out, or suffer in silence. Self-advocacy is the skill of speaking up for what you need respectfully and effectively.

Core Activity: The Advocacy Framework (15 minutes)

Introduce the **Advocacy Formula** and write it on chart paper:

The Advocacy Formula

1. **I notice / I feel** (State the observation or feeling)
2. **Because** (Explain the reason)
3. **I would like** (Make a specific, reasonable request)
4. **Thank you** (Express appreciation for listening)

Example: "I notice I already understand this math concept, because I studied it independently. I would like to try the challenge problems instead. Thank you."

Discuss important considerations for effective self-advocacy:

- **Timing matters** — Approach the teacher privately, not in the middle of a lesson.
- **Tone matters** — Advocate, don't demand. Use a respectful, calm voice.
- **Be specific** — "I need harder work" is vague. "I would like to try the extension activity" is specific.

- **It's okay if the answer is no** — Advocacy is about expressing your need, not guaranteeing an outcome. If the answer is no, ask: "What would make this possible?"

Student Activity: "My Advocacy Script" & Role-Play (20 minutes)

Distribute the "My Advocacy Script" worksheet. Students identify one real need they currently have (academic, social, or emotional) and write a script using the Advocacy Formula. Examples of needs:

- "I need more challenge in reading."
- "I need a quiet space when I feel overwhelmed."
- "I need to work independently sometimes instead of in a group."
- "I need my perfectionism to be understood, not dismissed."

Once scripts are written, have students practice in pairs using role-play. One student plays themselves, the other plays the teacher or peer. Encourage the "listener" to respond in different ways (agree, ask questions, say no) so the advocate can practice flexibility.

Closing: "Advocacy Commitment" (5 minutes)

Each student writes their advocacy statement on a card to keep as a reminder. Close with the group affirmation: "My needs matter. My voice matters. I can speak up for myself."

Differentiation

Grades 3–5	Grades 6–8
Provide pre-written sentence starters for the Advocacy Formula. Use concrete, relatable scenarios (e.g., asking for a break, asking for help with a friendship problem). Practice in a low-pressure setting with a trusted peer.	Explore the fear of being labeled "bossy" or "arrogant" when advocating, especially for girls and culturally diverse students. Practice writing advocacy emails to teachers. Discuss how to advocate in situations where there is a power imbalance or when adults dismiss their needs.

Assessment Notes

Note students who struggle to identify any needs—they may have learned to suppress their needs to avoid conflict or attention. Also note students whose scripts are aggressive rather than assertive; they may need additional coaching on tone and phrasing. Celebrate students who take the risk to advocate, even imperfectly. Follow up in subsequent sessions to check whether students used their advocacy skills and what the outcome was.

My Intensity Triggers

Triggers are situations or events that cause your emotional volume to spike quickly. Check the ones that apply to you, then add your own.

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Unfairness or injustice | ☐ Boredom or lack of challenge |
| ☐ Loud noises or crowds | ☐ Too many demands at once |
| ☐ Making a mistake | ☐ Transitions or unexpected changes |
| ☐ Being told I'm "too sensitive" | ☐ Feeling left out |
| ☐ Seeing someone else upset | ☐ Perfectionism / fear of failure |
| ☐ Not understanding something quickly | ☐ Other: _____ |

My biggest trigger is: _____

My Regulation Strategies Menu

When your volume is rising, you need tools to turn it down. Circle or highlight the strategies that work for you, then add your own. These are your "menu" options when intensity strikes.

Physical	Mental
• 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding • Box Breathing • Go for a walk / run • Use a fidget • Stretch / yoga pose • Drink cold water	• Count backwards from 100 • Recite a memorized poem/song • Think of 5 things I'm grateful for • Reframe the thought • Read a book • Solve a puzzle
Creative	Social / Restorative
• Draw / doodle • Write in this journal • Listen to music • Build something • Imaginative play / daydream	• Talk to a trusted adult • Spend time with a pet • Ask for a break • Sit in a quiet space • Rest / take a nap

Daily Intensity Tracker

Use this tracker to record moments of high intensity. Over time, you will start to see patterns that help you predict and manage your emotions more effectively.

Date	Trigger happened?)	(What	Volume (1-10)	My Response	Strategy I Used / Could Use

Patterns I Notice:

After tracking for a week, look at your entries. What patterns do you see?

- My most common triggers are: _____
- My volume is usually highest at (time of day / situation): _____
- The strategy that worked best for me was: _____
- Next time, I want to try: _____

Section 7: Teacher Consultation Notes

Use these structured templates to document observations, consultation meetings, and action plans for gifted learners' social-emotional development. Consistent documentation ensures continuity of support and facilitates collaboration among educators and parents.

Teacher Consultation Notes			
Student Name:	_____	Grade:	_____
Date:	_____	Teacher:	_____ _____
Referral Concern: (Check all that apply)	☐ Perfectionism ☐ Asynchronous Dev. ☐ Emotional Intensity ☐ Peer Relationships ☐ Overexcitabilities ☐ Stress/Burnout ☐ Self-Advocacy ☐ Other: _____		
Observations: (What do you see?)			
Student Strengths: (Social-Emotional)			
Impact on Learning: (How does this affect school?)			
Strategies Tried:			
Action Plan / Recommendations:			
Follow-Up Date:	_____	Consultant:	_____ _____

Ongoing Progress Log

Date	Observation / Strategy	Student Response	Next Steps

Section 8: Parent Communication Guide

Effective home-school communication is essential for supporting gifted learners' social-emotional development. Parents of gifted children are often their most fierce advocates, but they may also feel anxious, misunderstood, or frustrated by the school system. These templates and guidelines will help you build collaborative, trusting relationships with families.

Guiding Principles

- **Lead with Strengths:** Always begin communications by acknowledging the child's strengths and positive qualities. Parents of gifted children are used to hearing about problems; stand out by noticing the good.
- **Normalize Their Experience:** Many parents feel alone in their struggles. Use language like, "This is very common for gifted learners," or "Many families in our program share this experience."
- **Be Specific:** Avoid vague statements like "He needs to try harder." Instead, say, "When the work is not challenging, he tends to disengage. Here is what we are trying to help."
- **Invite Partnership:** Frame your communication as a collaboration. "I'd love to hear what works at home," or "Let's brainstorm together."
- **Respond Promptly:** Gifted children's emotional crises can escalate quickly. Respond to parent concerns within 24 hours, even if it's just to say, "I hear you and I'm looking into this."

Email Template: Initial Outreach

Subject: Supporting [Student Name]'s Social-Emotional Growth

Dear [Parent Name],

I hope this email finds you well. I am reaching out because I want to share some exciting things we are doing in our gifted program to support students' social-emotional development, and to discuss how we can partner to support [Student Name].

Recently, we have been exploring topics like perfectionism, emotional intensity, and peer relationships—all of which are very common experiences for gifted learners. [Student Name] has shown wonderful [strength, e.g., self-awareness / empathy / willingness to reflect] during our discussions.

I would love to hear about your observations at home. Are there any social-emotional areas where you feel [Student Name] could use additional support? I have found that when home and school are aligned, students benefit greatly.

Please let me know if you would be available for a brief phone call or meeting this week or next. Thank you for your continued partnership!

Warm regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Title]

Email Template: Follow-Up on a Concern

Subject: Checking In — [Student Name]

Dear [Parent Name],

Thank you for sharing your concerns about [Student Name]'s [specific concern, e.g., emotional intensity / perfectionism / peer relationships]. I want you to know that I take this seriously, and I appreciate you bringing it to my attention.

At school, I have noticed [specific observation, e.g., that when [Student Name] makes a mistake, they tend to shut down / that they often prefer to work alone / that they become very upset when they perceive unfairness]. This is very common for gifted learners, and there are strategies we can use to help.

Here is what I am implementing at school:

- [Strategy 1, e.g., Teaching a grounding technique when they feel overwhelmed]
- [Strategy 2, e.g., Providing a "safe space" they can go to when emotions escalate]

Here are some questions I have for you:

- What does this look like at home?
- Are there strategies that have worked for you?
- Are there any triggers you think I should be aware of?

I would love to schedule a time to talk further. Please let me know what works best for you.

With appreciation,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

Conference Prep Checklist

- Review student self-assessment and consultation notes
- Prepare 2– specific examples of the student's social-emotional strengths
- Prepare 2– specific, objective examples of the concern (without judgment)
- Identify 2– strategies or accommodations to propose
- Draft questions to ask the parent about their home observations
- Prepare a take-home resource for the parent (e.g., OE Explainer from Section 5)



Thank You!

Thank you for choosing the **Gifted Learner Social-Emotional Support Pack** by **UM Printables**. We are passionate about providing premium, research-based resources that truly meet the unique needs of gifted learners.

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