



JAC-CEN-DEL SCHOOL
CORPORATION
HIGH ABILITY
PARENT HANDBOOK



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What is Giftedness?



Students with gifts and talents perform—or have the capability to perform—at higher levels compared to others of the same age, experience, and environment in one or more domains. They require modification(s) to their educational experience(s) to learn and realize their potential. Student with gifts and talents:

- Come from all racial, ethnic, and cultural populations, as well as all economic strata.
- Require sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities to realize their potential.
- Can have learning and processing disorders that require specialized intervention and accommodation.
- Need support and guidance to develop socially and emotionally as well as in their areas of talent.

Read NAGC's full definition. This definition was developed from a white paper prepared by the NAGC Definition Task Force, Key Considerations in Identifying and Supporting Gifted and Talented Learners. It is difficult to estimate the absolute number of gifted children in the U.S. and the world because the calculation is dependent on the number of areas, or domains, being measured and the method used to identify gifted children. However, many consider children who are in the top 10 percent in relation to a national and/or local norm to be a good guide for identification and services.

It is important to note that not all gifted children look or act alike. Giftedness exists in every demographic group and personality type. It is important that adults look hard to discover potential and support gifted children as they reach for their personal best.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH ABILITY

A High Achiever...

A Gifted Learner...

Remembers the answers.	Poses unforeseen questions.
Get's A's.	May not be motivated by grades.
Is interested.	Is curious.
Is attentive.	Is selectively mentally engaged.
Generates advanced ideas.	Generates complex, abstract ideas.
Works hard to achieve.	Knows without working hard.
Answer the questions in detail.	Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives.
Performs at the top of the group.	Is beyond the group.
Learns with ease.	Already knows.
Needs 6-8 repetitions to master.	Needs 1-3 repetitions to master.
Enjoys the company of age peers.	Prefers the company of intellectual peers.
Grasps the meaning.	Infers and connects concepts.
Is receptive.	Is intense.
Is accurate and complete.	Is original and continually developing.
Enjoys school often.	Enjoys self-directed learning.
Is a technician with expertise in a field.	Is an expert who abstracts beyond a field.
Memorizes well.	Guesses and infers well.
Is pleased with own learning.	Is self-critical.

Kingore, B. (Spring 2004). "High Achiever, Gifted Learner, Creative Thinker."
 Understanding Our Gifted. www.bertiekingore.com

Common Characteristics of Gifted Individuals

Because gifted children are so diverse, not all exhibit all characteristics all of the time. However, there are common characteristics that many gifted individuals share:

- Unusual alertness, even in infancy
- Rapid learner; puts thoughts together quickly
- Excellent memory
- Unusually large vocabulary and complex sentence structure for age
- Advanced comprehension of word nuances, metaphors and abstract ideas
- Enjoys solving problems, especially with numbers and puzzles
- Often self-taught reading and writing skills as preschooler
- Deep, intense feelings and reactions
- Highly sensitive
- Thinking is abstract, complex, logical, and insightful
- Idealism and sense of justice at early age
- Concern with social and political issues and injustices
- Longer attention span and intense concentration
- Preoccupied with own thoughts—daydreamer
- Learn basic skills quickly and with little practice
- Asks probing questions
- Wide range of interests (or extreme focus in one area)
- Highly developed curiosity
- Interest in experimenting and doing things differently
- Puts idea or things together that are not typical
- Keen and/or unusual sense of humor
- Desire to organize people/things through games or complex schemas
- Vivid imaginations (and imaginary playmates when in preschool)

Reproduced by permission from: Webb, J., Gore, J., Amend, E., DeVries, A. (2007). *A parent's guide to gifted children*. Tuscon, AZ: Great Potential Press, www.greatpotentialpress.com.

Traits of Giftedness No gifted individual is exactly the same, each with his own unique patterns and traits. There are many traits that gifted individuals have in common, but no gifted learner exhibits traits in every area. This list of traits may help you better understand whether or not your child is gifted.

Cognitive	Creative	Affective	Behavioral
Keen power of abstraction	Creativeness and inventiveness	Unusual emotional depth and intensity	Spontaneity
Interest in problem-solving and applying concepts	Keen sense of humor	Sensitivity or empathy to the feelings of others	Boundless enthusiasm
Voracious and early reader	Ability for fantasy	High expectations of self and others, often leading to feelings of frustration	Intensely focused on passions—resists changing activities when engrossed in own interests
Large vocabulary	Openness to stimuli, wide interests	Heightened self-awareness, accompanied by feelings of being different	Highly energetic—needs little sleep or down time
Intellectual curiosity	Intuitiveness	Easily wounded, need for emotional support	Constantly questions
Power of critical thinking, skepticism, self-criticism	Flexibility	Need for consistency between abstract values and personal actions	Insatiable curiosity
Persistent, goal-directed behavior	Independence in attitude and social behavior	Advanced levels of moral judgment	Impulsive, eager and spirited
Independence in work and study	Self-acceptance and unconcern for social norms	Idealism and sense of justice	Perseverance—strong determination in areas of importance
Diversity of interests and abilities	Radicalism		High levels of frustration—particularly when having difficulty meeting standards of performance (either imposed by self or others)
	Aesthetic and moral commitment to self-selected work		Volatile temper, especially related to perceptions of failure
			Non-stop talking/chattering

Source: Clark, B. (2008). *Growing up gifted (7th ed.)* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Common Myths About Gifted Students

- Gifted students are a homogeneous group, all high achievers.
- Gifted students are gifted in all areas and do not need help in school. If they are really gifted, they can manage on their own.
- Gifted students have fewer problems than others because their intelligence and abilities somehow exempt them from the hassles of daily life.
- The future of a gifted student is assured: a world of opportunities lies before the student.
- Gifted students are self-directed and know where they are heading.
- The social and emotional development of the gifted student is at the same level as his or her intellectual development.
- Gifted students are nerds and social loners.
- The primary value of the gifted student lies in his or her brain power.
- The gifted student's family always prizes his or her abilities.
- Gifted students need to serve as examples to others and they should always assume extra responsibility.
- Gifted students make everyone else smarter.
- Gifted students can accomplish anything they put their minds to if they apply themselves.
- Gifted students are naturally creative and do not need encouragement.
- Gifted children are easy to raise.



Adapted from *College Planning for Gifted Students*, 2nd edition, by Sandra Berger.

Frequent Truths About Gifted Students

- Gifted students are often perfectionists. They may equate achievement and grades with self-esteem and self-worth. This can lead to fear of failure and interferes with achievement.
- Gifted students are asynchronous. Their chronological age, social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development may all be at different levels. For example, a 5-year-old may be able to read and comprehend a third-grade book but may not be able to write legibly and prefers to spend time with older children or adults.
- Some gifted children are "mappers" (sequential learners), while others are "leapers" (spatial learners). Leapers may not know how they got a "right answer." Mappers may get lost in the steps leading to the right answer.
- Gifted students may be so far ahead of their chronological age mates that they know more than half the curriculum before the school year begins! The lack of challenge may lead to boredom, underachievement, and frustration.
- Gifted children are problem solvers. They benefit from working on open-ended, interdisciplinary problems; for example, how to solve a shortage of community resources.
- Gifted students often refuse to work for grades alone.
- Gifted students often think abstractly and with such complexity that they may need help with concrete study and test-taking skills. They may not be able to select one answer in a multiple choice question because they see how all the answers might be correct.
- Gifted students who do well in school may define success as getting an "A" and failure as any grade less than an "A." By early adolescence they may be unwilling to try anything where they are not certain of guaranteed success.

Adapted from *College Planning for Gifted Students*, 2nd edition, by Sandra Berger.

What can parents do for their child?

Each child has strengths in certain areas, whether in math; language arts; physical, natural, and social sciences; music; visual and performing arts; leadership; athletics; philanthropy; or some other field. To help bright children discover what they do best, we need to help them explore their interests and abilities.

At home

- Be attentive to your child's comments and observations.
- Create an environment that promotes self-expression.
- Help him to develop skills and interests, for example, in plant science, animal care, electronics, carpentry, mechanics, law, design, and crafts.
- Encourage her to explore the beauty of diverse cultures—through language, poetry, story, song, dance, puppetry, cooking, and crafts.
- Promote exploration and discovery.
- Emphasize effort and progress rather than perfection.
- Show your child how errors can be opportunities to discover and learn.
- Model positive ways to address setbacks and solve problems.
- Instill ways to help your child understand and regulate emotional reactions.
- Promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Demonstrate how to serve your community.

In the community

Find or create opportunities where your child can explore interests and nurture talent.

- Universities and community organizations offer after school, weekend, summer, and online enrichment programs.
- Mentors and talent experts can be guides and sources of knowledge and inspiration.
- Activities and outside courses can nurture talent and help establish friendships with those who share the same interests.
- Group and individual projects or competitions can help to build lifelong skills.

Social & Emotional Issues

Because gifted children demonstrate greater maturity in some domains over others, they may be at greater risk for specific kinds of social-emotional difficulties if their needs are not met.

These aspects may include heightened awareness, anxiety, perfectionism, stress, issues with peer relationships, and concerns with identity and fit. Parents, adults, and caregivers in their lives need to stay in tune with their specific child's needs, and help shape a strong framework for social-emotional health.

Keep in mind:

- A child gifted in one area does not mean gifted in all
- Giftedness can lead to the masking and misunderstanding of problem signs
- Not all gifted children are alike, including their own unique social-emotional profile
- There is no single, definitive recipe for maintaining a child's emotional equilibrium
- Parents need to model balance and set the tone to reduce stress/anxiety in the gifted child's life
- We can teach our children strategies and provide tools for dealing with the ebb and flow of life