

Common Characteristics and Concomitant Problems of Gifted and Talented Learners

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- What are some common characteristics and concomitant problems of gifted and talented learners?
- How do the characteristics and problems impact student engagement and motivation?
- How can schools provide affective support for gifted and talented learners?
- What resources are available?

MARSS Gifted and Talented Definition

Gifted and talented children and youth are those students with outstanding abilities, **identified** at preschool, elementary, and secondary levels. These students are capable of high performance when **compared** to others of similar age, experience, and environment, and represent the **diverse** populations of our communities.

These are students whose potential requires **differentiated** and challenging educational **programs** and/or **services** beyond those provided in the general school program.

Students capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement or potential ability in any one or more of the following areas **general intellectual, specific academic subjects, creativity, leadership, and visual and performing arts.**

Compared with other students, gifted learners often...

- Show persistent intellectual curiosity
- Have a wider range of interests
- Have a written and spoken vocabulary that is markedly superior in quality and quantity
- Read avidly
- Show insight into complex mathematical problems...

Gifted learners may...

- Show creative ability or imaginative expression in the arts
- Sustain concentration for lengthy periods and show outstanding responsibility and independence in classroom work
- Set unrealistically high standards, be self-critical and correcting
- Show initiative and originality...

May also...

- Observe keenly
- Show social poise
- Get excited about intellectual challenges
- Show an alert and subtle sense of humor
- May be extraordinarily sensitive

Adapted from *When Gifted Kids Don't have All the Answers*
by Jim Delisle, Ph.D., & Judy Galbraith, M.A.

Bright Child

- Knows the answer
- Is interested
- Is attentive
- Has good ideas
- Works hard
- Answers the questions

Gifted Learner

- *Asks the question*
- *Is highly curious*
- *Mentally/physically involved*
- *Has wild, silly ideas*
- *Plays around/ tests well*
- *Discusses in detail; elaborates*

Bright Child

- Top of group
- Listens with interest
- Learns with ease
- 6-8 repetitions for mastery
- Understands ideas
- Enjoys peers

Gifted Learner

- *Beyond the group*
- *Shows strong feelings*
- *Already knows*
- *1-2 repetitions for mastery*
- *Constructs abstractions*
- *Prefers adults*

Bright Child

- Grasps the meaning
- Completes the work
- Is receptive
- Copies accurately
- Enjoys school

Gifted Learner

- *Draws the inferences*
- *Initiates projects*
- *Is intense*
- *Creates a new design*
- *Enjoys learning*

Bright Child

- Absorbs information
- Technician
- Good memorizer
- Is alert

Gifted Learner

- *Manipulates information*
- *Inventor*
- *Good guesser*
- *Is keenly observant*

Bright Child

- Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentations

Adapted from *Challenge* by Janice Szabos, 1989

Gifted Learner

- *Thrives on complexity*

Interrelationship of Characteristics, Needs, and Problems

adapted from *Growing up Gifted*, by Barbara Clark

CHARACTERISTIC	NEEDS	PROBLEM
Verbal proficiency	Share ideas verbally and in depth	Tends to dominate conversation; perceived as a “show-off”
Power of abstraction, conceptualization, generalizing	To develop inquiry skills, analyze own learning process	Questions others, (authority), may appear disrespectful

CHARACTERISTIC	NEEDS	PROBLEM
Accelerated thought process	Exposure to ideas at many levels	Frustrated at pace
Quantity of advanced info. on many topics	Provide new and challenging info.	Boredom w/ regular curriculum, impatient w/ group
Quick, accurate memory	Emphasize concepts	Dislike for routine drills
Able to concentrate and persist	To pursue inquiries	Perceived as stubborn; resists interruption ₅

CHARACTERISTIC	NEEDS	PROBLEM
Able to visualize relationships, prefers structure	Uses framework to gather info., develops tolerance for ambiguity	May irritate others, overextends energy level due to lack of integration
Gentle or hostile sense of humor	Learns how behaviors affect others	Negative use of humor may damage relationships
Heightened self-awareness; feels different	Group interaction w/ similarly talented	Isolation, self-consciousness
High expectations of self & others	Sets realistic goals	Self-criticism, others don't meet high standards

CHARACTERISTIC	NEEDS	PROBLEM
Discrepancy between physical and intellectual development	Appreciates physical capacities; finds satisfaction in physical activities	Hesitation to participate in activities where he/she doesn't excel
Responsible, self-confident, sociable, able to lead others	Understands leadership steps and practice in leadership skills	Perceived as "bossy," arrogant
Idealistic, sense of justice	Find solvable problems	Frustrations from attempting unrealistic reforms, depression

“Some of the people I know care more about their hair than world hunger. They just aren’t concerned about anything outside their own little world.”

Girl, 13

“I have a lot of trouble relating to kids my age. It’s as though we’re on a totally different wavelength. I prefer adult company to their conversations without being thought of as strange for knowing what’s going on.”

Boy, 14

When Gifted Kids Don’t Have All the Answers by Jim Delisle, Ph.D., & Judy Galbraith, M.A.

Common Affective Needs of Gifted Learners

- Extra Perception
- High Involvement
- Super-Sensitivity
- Perfectionism
- Uneven Integration

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Guiding Principals

- Gifted learners, because of their particular socio-emotional development, must be provided with guidance and counseling services by a counselor who is familiar with the characteristics and socio-emotional needs of gifted learners.
- Gifted learners must be provided with career guidance consistent with their unique strengths.

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- Gifted learners who are at risk must have special attention, counseling, and support to help them realize their full potential.
- Gifted learners must be provided with affective curriculum as part of differentiated curriculum and instructional services.
- Gifted students who are underachieving must not be exited from gifted programs because of related problems.

*Minimum standards: National Association for Gifted Children Pre-K-Grade 12
Gifted Program Standards: Socio-Emotional Guidance and Counseling*

Recommendations for the Affective Support of Gifted Learners

- Opportunities to interact with intellectual peers
 - Access to rigorous instruction
 - Acceleration
 - Flexibility
- Affective curriculum
- Differentiated guidance
 - Early career & college counseling

Recommendations continued

- Access to mentors
- Placement with staff who have an understanding of the nature and needs of gifted learners

For further study...

- Assouline, Susan et al (2009). *Iowa acceleration scale (3rd ed.) A guide for Whole-Grade Acceleration K-8*, Phoenix, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Clark, Barbara (2007). *Growing up gifted*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Galbraith, Judy (2009) *The gifted kids' survival guide for ages 10 and under*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.
- Galbraith, Judy (1996). *The gifted kids' survival guide: a teen handbook*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.
- Greenspon, Thomas (2007). *What to do when good enough isn't good enough: the real deal on perfectionism*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

- Halsted, Judith Wynn (2009). *Some of my best friends are books: guiding gifted readers (3rd ed.)*. Phoenix, AZ: Great Potential Press.
- Moon, Sidney, Reis Sally (2004). *Social/Emotional issues, underachievement and counseling of gifted and talented students, Vol. 8*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press
- Peterson, Sunde Jean (2008). *The essential guide for talking with gifted teens*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.
- Webb, James et al (2004). *Misdiagnosis and dual diagnoses of gifted children and adults: ADHD, bipolar, OCD, asperger's, depression, and other disorders* Phoenix, AZ : Great Potential Press.

Web Resources Organizations

- MN Council for Gifted and Talented
<http://www.mcgt.net/>
- MN Department of Education
<http://www.education.state.mn.us/mde/index.html>
- MN Educators of Gifted and Talented
<http://www.megt.org/>

More Organizations

- National Association for Gifted Children
<http://www.nagc.org/>
- National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt.html>
- Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted
<http://www.sengifted.org/>

Additional Resources

- *A Nation Deceived*
<http://nationdeceived.org/>
- Davidson Institute
<http://www.ditd.org/>
- Hoagies' Gifted Education Page
<http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/>

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