

What is Giftedness?

"Gifted and talented student" (as defined in the Texas Education Code) means a child or youth who performs at or shows the potential for performing at a remarkably high level of accomplishment when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment and who:

- 1 exhibits high performance capability in an intellectual, creative, or artistic area;
- 2 possesses an unusual capacity for leadership; or
- 3 excels in a specific academic field.

Informal Indicators of Giftedness

- Walks and talks at an early age
- Has a large and advanced vocabulary
- Learns rapidly and easily
- Reads at an early age
- Demonstrates a great appetite for books and reading
- Entertains self for large blocks of time
- Has a long attention span
- Readily retains a large amount of information
- Consistently organizes, sorts, classifies and groups things, and names them
- Has a heightened curiosity (asks 'why' often)
- Fantasizes often
- Is self-motivated, self-sufficient, and independent
- Shows sensitivity to other people's feelings and empathy in response to their troubles
- Demonstrates leadership abilities
- Exhibits perfectionism
- Likes to discuss abstract concepts (such as love, justice, etc.)
- Has a high energy, needing less sleep than age-mates

- Learns new material rapidly
- Loves puzzles, mazes, building blocks, and toys that challenge
- Has an advanced sense of humor
- Prefers the company of older children or adults
- Is highly creative, imaginative
- Is a keen observer
- Expresses unusual sensitivity to what they see, hear, touch, smell or feel
- Is widely informed, especially in areas of personal interest
- Expresses concern for the world's problems

Characteristics of Gifted Students

1. Verbal Proficiency

- Large vocabulary
- Facility of expression
- Breadth of information

3. Intellectual Curiosity

- Interest in a wide range of things
- Willingness for complexity
- Persistent pursuit of goals

5. Independence/Goal Directed

- Self-initiated student
- Pursues individual interests
- Seeks direction

7. Sensitivity/Intuitiveness

- High level of awareness
- Keenly observant
- Emotional depth

2. Power of Abstraction

- Interest in inductive learning and problem solving
- High level of conceptualization
- Pleasure in intellectual activity

4. Retentiveness/Power of Concentration

- Intense attention
- Retains and uses information
- Long attention span

6. Power of Critical Thinking

- Self-criticism
- Skepticism
- Adept in analyzing strengths and weaknesses

8. Potential for Creativity

- Inventiveness
- Liking for new ways of doing things
- Interest in brainstorming, freewheeling

9. **Versatility/Virtuosity**

- Diversity of interests and abilities
- Many hobbies
- Proficiency in art forms such as music and drawing

From *Raising Champions: A Parent's Guide for Nurturing Their Gifted Children*, by Dr. Michael Sayler

Needs of the Gifted

Gifted and talented children often have vastly different characteristics, and are sometimes grouped accordingly. For example, although a violin prodigy has a great deal in common with a math whiz, their needs are quite different. It must be remembered that all gifted children share a common need for a strong, supportive person to help them develop their gifts and talents to full potential.

Needs of Academically Gifted Individuals

- Varied outlets for intellectual curiosity
- Opportunity to work with challenging situations and people
- Expectations appropriate to ability
- Opportunities to make wide application of knowledge
- To study, discuss, and develop ideas within a responsive environment
- To be valued as a unique individual, not stereotyped as "gifted" only
- Training in constructive, responsible leadership
- Thorough training in all facets of thinking
- Assistance with reasonable, high standards of performance
- Emotional support and peer acceptance
- Help in dealing with frustration and inactivity

Needs of Creative Individuals

- Opportunity to respond constructively to new situations

- Freedom to question and examine the unusual, unknown, and puzzling
- Opportunity to meet challenge and attempt difficult tasks
- Preference for complexity
- Willingness to take risks
- To submerge oneself completely in a task
- To be honest and search for truth
- Urge to be different, unique, individual

Needs of Talented Individuals

- Access to models in the area of talent
- Development of skills to a high level
- Feedback on success
- Specific help in overcoming obstacles
- Opportunity to progress at one's own rate
- Systematic teaching of techniques for changing oneself
- Someone to study performance carefully and critique thoroughly
- Assistance in setting a reasonable, high standard of achievement
- Assistance with knowledge of how to tolerate frustration

Written by Thelma Epley

The Demands of Giftedness

- 1 To feel the need to focus on or devour a subject.
- 2 To make observations; to see relationships.
- 3 To place high standards on himself.
- 4 To be creative or inventive; to seek an unusual or unique approach to an assignment.
- 5 To question generalizations.
- 6 To be serious-minded; to be intolerant (usually) of foolishness or silliness.
- 7 To concentrate - to become totally absorbed in a task - to have a longer attention span.

- 8 To explore wide interests at a maturity beyond his chronological age.
- 9 To be sensitive to honor and truth.
- 10 To express ideas and reactions. (Sometimes seen as argumentative)
- 11 To resist routine, drill; to require unique ways of pursuing drill.
- 12 To work alone.
- 13 To be intolerant of stupidity.
- 14 To seek order, structure, and consistency.
- 15 To do critical, evaluative thinking. (May lead to critical attitude toward self and others)
- 16 To be rarely satisfied with the simple and obvious.
- 17 To be impatient with a sloppy or disorganized thinking.
- 18 To have his intelligence responded to.
- 19 To seek out his mental peers.
- 20 To be friendly and outgoing.
- 21 To use his power of abstraction; to see and point out cause-and-effect relationships.
- 22 To have time for thinking - solitude.
- 23 To pursue a learning pace of his own. (May be fast or slow)
- 24 To be outstanding in several areas but average in some.

Developed by Jeanne Delp, Consultant for Gifted, Garden Grove, California

The Challenges of Giftedness

Strengths

- 1. Acquires/retains information quickly
- 2. Inquisitive; searches for significance
- 3. Intrinsic motivation
- 4. Enjoys problem solving; able to use abstract reasoning
- 5. Seeks cause-effect relations
- 6. Emphasizes truth, equity, and fair play

Possible Problems

- 1. Impatient with others; dislikes routine
- 2. Asks embarrassing questions
- 3. Strong-willed; resists direction
- 4. Resists routine practice; questions use abstract reasoning procedures
- 5. Dislikes unclear/illogical areas (such as traditions or feelings)
- 6. Worries about humanitarian concerns

7. Seeks to organize things and people
8. Large vocabulary; advanced, broad information
9. High expectations of self and others
10. Creative/inventive; likes new ways of doing things
11. Intense concentration; long attention span; persistence in areas of interest
12. Sensitivity, empathy, desire to be accepted
13. High energy, alertness, eagerness
14. Independent; prefers working solo; self-reliant
15. Diverse interests and abilities; versatility
16. Strong sense of humor

7. Constructs complicated rules; often seen as bossy
8. May use words to manipulate; bored with school and age-peers
9. Intolerant, perfectionist; may become depressed
10. May be seen as disruptive and out of step
11. Neglects duties/people during periods of focus; seen as stubborn
12. Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection
13. Frustration with inactivity, may be seen as hyperactive
14. May reject parent or peer input; nonconformity
15. May appear disorganized or scattered; frustrated over lack of time
16. Peers may misunderstand humor; may become "class clown" for attention

Adapted from Clark (1992) and Seagoe (1972)