

Common Characteristics of Gifted Learners

COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS THAT REQUIRE MODIFICATIONS OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

- ★ Extraordinary quantity of information
- ★ Unusual retentiveness
- ★ Advanced comprehension
- ★ Unusually varied interests and curiosity
- ★ High level of language development, often at an early age
- ★ High level of verbal ability
- ★ Unusual capacity for processing information
- ★ Accelerated pace of thought processes
- ★ Flexible thought processes
- ★ Comprehensive synthesis
- ★ Early ability to delay closure
- ★ Heightened capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships, integration of ideas and disciplines
- ★ Ability to generate original ideas and solutions
- ★ Early differential patterns for thought processing (e.g., thinking in alternative, abstract terms; sensing consequences; making generalizations; visual thinking; use of metaphors and analogies)
- ★ Early ability to use and form conceptual frameworks
- ★ An evaluative approach toward self and others
- ★ Unusual intensity, persistent goal-directed behavior

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- ★ Show better emotional adjustment than non-gifted children, although some studies indicate a closer relationship to socioeconomic differences than to intellectual differences.
- ★ Have a high energy level, which can result in emotional excitability, high sensitivity, rapid and compulsive verbalization, abundant imagination, and emotional reactions that can be extremely elevated or depressed.

- ★ Are more independent and less conforming to peer opinions, more dominant, more forceful, and more competitive than typical learners
- ★ Show a high level of persistence, attention, curiosity, enjoyment of learning, and orientation toward mastery and challenge from their early years through adolescence.
- ★ Exhibit a tendency for excessive self-criticism and a pattern of unrealistic self-assessment based on unreasonably high expectations of their performance, resulting in one element of perfectionism, dissatisfaction with the difference between their expectations of ideal performance and their assessment of their actual performance.
- ★ Report more positive feelings regarding themselves and others and perceive themselves to be cognitively more competent, with greater confidence in their own control over successes or failures in school tasks, compared with regular age-peer
- ★ Prefer their intellectual peers to their chronological age peers, resulting in a social preference for older children and adults. They lack interest in children of lower mental age and choose friends among children like themselves. They relate well to adults and may have problems playing with less able playmates.
- ★ Hold a high social status among their classmates, who often prefer them as companions (this is especially true of boys); this is more dependent on the students' self-concept than on their level of giftedness. This factor seems to diminish at the secondary level, especially if other preferred factors of popularity (e.g., athletic ability) are not also displayed.
- ★ Often show leadership ability and become involved in community projects and concerns. Concern for universal problems and the welfare of others begins much earlier than for more typically developing children. When involved in group leadership, they emphasize parliamentary procedure and minimize the use of more autocratic or laissez-faire approaches to governance.
- ★ Tend to be very idealistic, seeking what is fair and just at an early age. They are more sensitive to values and moral issues, understanding “good behavior” and “bad behavior” very early. They usually are sensitive to the feelings and rights of others and empathize with their problems. It is not unusual for gifted students to be deeply concerned about social issues – those in their school, as well as those half a world away.

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