



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS of the GIFTED

Social and Emotional Needs of the Gifted - From "Gifted All Day Long", Margaret Gosfield: Leadership, September/October, 2002.

Just as gifted learners differ in their intellectual and academic development, so do they differ in their social and emotional development. It is not acceptable to say that if they are truly gifted, they'll make it on their own. Teachers, administrators, parents and counselors need information regarding the unique social and emotional traits of gifted learners.

Gifted children often exhibit:

- Intense feelings and emotions
- Advanced maturity
- Intense curiosity; a "rage" to learn [about what they are interested in at the moment]
- Perfectionism
- Heightened concerns about issues of morality, justice and spirituality

If these children are not understood or if we are not tuned into some key warning signals, these children can be at higher risk for academic underachievement, social alienation and a host of associated problematic concerns.

Frequent Characteristics of High Potential/Gifted/Talented Children - From Webb, J.T. and Kleine, P.A. (1993): Assessing Gifted and Talented Children.

- Unusually large vocabularies
- Complex sentence structures
- Greater comprehension of language nuances
- Longer attention span, persistence (where interested)
- Intensity of feelings and actions (most universal)
- Wide range of interests • Strong curiosity; limitless questions
- Likes to experiment; does things differently
- Tends to put ideas or things together in unusual ways
- Able to learn basic skills quickly and with less practice than peers
- Largely self-taught reading and writing skills as pre-schoolers
- Unusually good memory and retention
- Unusual sense of humor; may use puns
- Likes to organize people and things, typically through devising complex games
- Imaginary playmates (as pre-schooler)
- Often doesn't need much sleep; deeper sleep; intense dreams
- Sensory intensity – dislike tags in shirts, can "hear" florescent lights
- Easily distracted if not engaged
- Poor handwriting

Possible Problems that may be Associated with Characteristic Strengths of Gifted Children -

Adapted from Clark (1992) and Seago (1974)

Traits	Issues
Acquires and retains information quickly	Impatient with slowness of others; dislikes routine and drill; may resist mastering foundation skills; may make concepts unduly complex
Inquisitive attitude, intellectual curiosity; intrinsic motivation; searching for significance	Asks embarrassing questions; strong-willed; resists direction; seems excessive in interests; expects same of others
Can see cause-effect relationships	Difficulty accepting the illogical – such as feelings, traditions or matters to be taken on faith
Love of truth, equity and fair play	Difficulty in being practical or seeing shades of gray; worry about humanitarian concerns
Enjoys organizing things and people into structure and order; seeks to systematize	Constructs complicated rules or systems; may be seen as bossy, rude or domineering
Large vocabulary and facile verbal proficiency; broad information in advanced areas	May use words to escape or avoid situations; seen by others as a "know it all"
Thinks critically; has high expectations; is self-critical and evaluates others	Critical or intolerant toward others; may become discouraged or depressed; perfectionist
Keen observer; willing to consider the unusual; open to new experiences	Overly intense focus; occasional gullibility
Creative and inventive; likes new ways of doing things	May disrupt plans or reject what is already known; seen by others as different and out of step
Intense concentration; long attention span in areas of interest; goal-directed behavior; persistence	Resists interruption; neglects duties or people during period of focused interests; stubbornness
Sensitivity, empathy for others; desire to be accepted by other	Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection; expects others to have similar values; need for success and recognition; may feel different and alienated
High energy, alert, eager, periods of intense effort	Frustration with inactivity; eagerness may disrupt others; schedules, needs continual stimulation, may be seen as hyperactive
Independent; prefers individualized work; reliant on self	May reject parent or peer input; nonconformity; may be unconventional
Diverse interests and abilities; versatile	May appear scattered and disorganized; frustrations over lack of time; others may expect continual competence
Strong sense of humor	Sees absurdities of situations; humor may not be understood by peers; may become the "class clown" to gain attention