

### **A Short Guide to Giftedness**

What exactly does it mean to be gifted? There are a variety of ways giftedness is defined, however students are often identified by their score being within the top 3% of all students of their age on intelligence or academic tests. Some skill areas identified for gifted students may also include leadership, the arts, or a particular subject, however giftedness is always related to being exceptional (unusually good or outstanding) relative to peers. Giftedness may relate to particular skills (sometimes referred to as talents) but many tests are looking for a student's potential. Traditional IQ tests are used to examine a student's potential at times. IQ tests are typically examining things like: vocabulary, memory, speed of processing information, learning of new tasks, and connections / understandings across a variety of areas. These are areas often thought of as "gifted". Other traits many have researched that may not be thought of as "gifted" but are often noted include: emotional intensity, sensitivity, advanced humor, perfectionism, feeling different than others, and creative / unique thinking. Some of these traits can lead to struggles for gifted students. If they are not cultivated and worked with by students, they may lead to "checking out" of school work, getting into trouble in general, and feelings of anxiety or depression.

Giftedness is not something that just appears and disappears. Just as a person identified as intellectually disabled continues to have that disability, a person that is gifted continues to be gifted. It may or may not translate into actual skills. Students that are gifted, if not motivated or focused, may not be learning a great deal. A person can be gifted and be behind in some areas while advanced in others. A person can also be gifted, but struggle because of being "twice exceptional" meaning they also have a disability such as ADHD, Autism, Learning Disabilities, or other disabilities. This confuses people who equate giftedness with being "really good" in academics. Many students that are good academically are advanced or ahead of peers, though not to the level of "giftedness" on a lot of tests.

- **COMMON TRAITS of GIFTED STUDENTS:**

- ***Alertness***
- ***Faster pace of reading developmental milestones***
- ***Advanced vocabulary***
- ***Sustained attention***
- ***Excellent memory***
- ***Creativity***
- ***May be an early reader***
- ***Early development of empathy***
- ***Emotional intensity and sensitivity***
- ***Frustrations with limitations***
- ***Perfectionism***
- ***Leader during cooperative play***

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- *Over-excitabilities (additional energy/ focus in the areas of psychomotor/movement, sensual/sensitive to particular lights/sounds etc, intellectual/ passionate learning, imaginal/creative, and emotional-sensitive and big feelings toward self and others)*

**TYPICAL STRESSORS FOR THE GIFTED:**

- Boredom in school (not learning anything)*
- tremendous skill in some areas but behind in others (also part of asynchrony)*
- Lack of time for devotion of interests, passions, and strengths*
- Lack of understanding by teachers / administrators about what giftedness means (and does not mean) so programs / lectures not designed with their needs in mind*
- Perfectionism leading to struggles with anxiety, underperformance, depression*
- Lack of true peers (or don't know where to find them / identify them)*
- Feelings of being different / alien*
- intensity, sensitivity, and over-excitabilities: psychomotor, imaginal, intellectual, sensual, emotional (sengifted.org)*

**RELIEF FROM STRESSORS:**

- Community recreation centers*
- A plan with your teacher / school gifted coordinator*
- Gifted or accelerated programs online, on weekends, in summers*
- Create time specifically for passions*
- Join student support groups/services (may be through parent groups)*
- Check out counseling / support services*
- Strongly encourage journaling, exercise, "arts", meditation, self reflection, realistic personal goal setting, and documenting progress*

**A SAMPLING OF RESOURCES:**

- [www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org) Website with many articles, links, and resources
- [www.gifteddevelopment.com](http://www.gifteddevelopment.com) –a local site related to schools, services, and testing
- [sengifted.org](http://sengifted.org)- a website related to social and emotional needs of the gifted
- [nagc.org](http://nagc.org) –National Association for Gifted Children- articles, conferences, and other info.
- [cagt.org](http://cagt.org)- Colorado Association of Gifted and Talented- articles, conferences, and other info.