

# Characteristics and Behaviors of the Gifted

## Identifying The Gifted

- Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read.
- Isaac Newton did poorly in grade school.
- When Thomas Edison was a boy, his teachers told him he was too stupid to learn anything.
- F.W.Woolworth got a job in a dry goods store when he was 21. But his employers would not let him wait on a customer because he "Didn't have enough sense."
- A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because he had "No good ideas"
- Caruso's music teacher told him "You can't sing, you have no voice at all."
- Leo Tolstoy flunked out of college.
- Verner Von Braun flunked 9th grade algebra.
- Admiral Richard E. Byrd had been retired from the navy, as, "Unfit for service" Until he flew over both poles.
- Louis Pasteur was rated as mediocre in chemistry when he attended the Royal College
- Abraham Lincoln entered The Black Hawk War as a captain and came out a private
- Fred Waring was once rejected from high school chorus.
- Winston Churchill failed the sixth grade.

## Recognizing the Characteristics of Gifted Children

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children (1985) cites three types of characteristics of gifted children: general behavioral, learning, and creative characteristics.

### General Behavior Characteristics

Gifted children's behavior differs from that of their age-mates in the following ways:

Many gifted children learn to read early, with better comprehension of the nuances of language.

As much as half the gifted and talented population has learned to read before entering school.

- Gifted children often read widely, quickly, and intensely and have large vocabularies.
- Gifted children commonly learn basic skills better, more quickly, and with less practice.
- They are better able to construct and handle abstractions.
- They often pick up and interpret nonverbal cues and can draw inferences that other children need to have spelled out for them.
- They take less for granted, seeking the "hows" and "whys."
- They can work independently at an earlier age and can concentrate for longer periods.
- Their interests are both wildly eclectic and intensely focused.
- They often have seemingly boundless energy, which sometimes leads to a misdiagnosis of hyperactivity.
- They usually respond and relate well to parents, teachers, and other adults. They may prefer the company of older children and adults to that of their peers.
- They like to learn new things, are willing to examine the unusual, and are highly inquisitive.
- They tackle tasks and problems in a well-organized, goal-directed, and efficient manner.
- They exhibit an intrinsic motivation to learn, find out, or explore and are often very persistent. "I'd rather do it myself" is a common attitude.

### **Learning Characteristics**

- Gifted children are natural learners who often show many of these characteristics:
- They may show keen powers of observation and a sense of the significant; they have an eye for important details.
- They may read a great deal on their own, preferring books and magazines written for children older than they are.
- They often take great pleasure in intellectual activity.
- They have well-developed powers of abstraction, conceptualization, and synthesis.
- They readily see cause-effect relationships.
- They often display a questioning attitude and seek information for its own sake as much as for its usefulness.
- They are often skeptical, critical, and evaluative. They are quick to spot inconsistencies.
- They often have a large storehouse of information about a variety of topics, which they can recall quickly.
- They readily grasp underlying principles and can often make valid generalizations about events, people, or objects.
- They quickly perceive similarities, differences, and anomalies.
- They often attack complicated material by separating it into components and analyzing it systematically.

### **Creative Characteristics**

- Gifted children's creative abilities often set them apart from their age-mates. These characteristics may take the following forms:
- Gifted children are fluent thinkers, able to generate possibilities, consequences, or related ideas.
- They are flexible thinkers, able to use many different alternatives and approaches to problem solving.
- They are original thinkers, seeking new, unusual, or unconventional associations and combinations among items of information.
- They can also see relationships among seemingly unrelated objects, ideas, or facts.
- They are elaborate thinkers, producing new steps, ideas, responses, or other embellishments to a basic idea, situation, or problems.
- They are willing to entertain complexity and seem to thrive on problem solving.
- They are good guessers and can readily construct hypotheses or "what if" questions.
- They often are aware of their own impulsiveness and irrationality, and they show emotional sensitivity.
- They are extremely curious about objects, ideas, situations, or events.
- They often display intellectual playfulness and like to fantasize and imagine.
- They can be less intellectually inhibited than their peers are in expressing opinions and ideas, and they often disagree spiritedly with others' statements.
- They are sensitive to beauty and are attracted to aesthetic values.

*Characteristics and Behaviors of the Gifted.* Retrieved September 10, 2007, from The Rhode Island State Advisory Committee on Gifted and Talented Education Web site:  
[http://www.ri.net/gifted\\_talented/character.html](http://www.ri.net/gifted_talented/character.html)