

Characteristics of The Gifted Individual Academic Impact of Traits

All of these Characteristics and Traits Influence Academic Needs.

*Have no doubt that this is Special Education.
These children are frequently “misfits” in our
traditional classroom settings.*

Asynchronous Development:

- Social, Emotional, Physical, and Academic Development will not follow the traditional age limits that other children have. It will be like the equalizer on a sound unit – up and down in different areas. Although this is true of all children, the range of change will be more extreme with gifted individuals.
- Development may be subject specific.
- **Academic Impact:**
 - This fluctuation may cause academic issues. For example, the 8 year old child capable of reading on a high school level but the reading material available is not appropriate; or the math student who can do Algebra II but does not have the scientific background to accompany the problems presented. Students may need both acceleration and an amount of remediation simultaneously.
 - Peer relationships may be difficult because they “think differently.”

Fast Rate of Acquisition:

- Pacing of lessons will be difficult for a gifted student. Average rates of acquisition require 7 repetitions to go from short term to long term memory. Gifted individuals may learn content in 1 – 3 repetitions. They must implement coping skills continually through the many repetitions in class. (Imagine a regular education student in a special education class every day, all day. A parallel situation exists for gifted children.)
Coping skills may be positive or negative.
- Even when accelerated, pacing of lessons may continue to be an issue.
- If they do struggle with understanding a concept, even though they get an “A,” their self-perception may be that they do not do well with a topic
- **Academic Impact:**
 - May “know” answers without instruction; difficulty explaining their mental process in a sequential manner
 - Students must continually exert mental effort to stay engaged through repeated presentations of information necessary for other students.

- May present issues over maintaining focus on content presented in class
- This may lead to on-going behavior problems. Students may:
 1. look for alternative activities during instruction
 2. “tune out” and not listening to directions
 3. do creative work rather than required assigned work
 4. rush through work and making careless errors
- Continual free reading time when they complete work early is not adequate instructional use of time for these students.

Strong Rate of Retention:

- Gifted students retain information from previous years and do not need the amount of review provided within our spiraling curricula.
- Gifted students “absorb” information from their environment and continually apply these observations to new material in class – if new material is available.
- **Academic Impact:**
 - Enrichment/compaction options for the first 2 – 3 chapters of a text or curriculum at the beginning of the year
 - Opportunities/time in class to express ideas and concepts from background information
 - Opportunities to express reasoning on test questions and discussions in class; may express important ideas that are non-traditional and outside of material presented

Intensities:

- Gifted Individuals frequently have “passions” and refuse to let go of a topic.
- The passion for depth may lead to issues over the breadth of curriculum presented. (engineering thought processes)
- Gifted students may exhibit extreme sensitivities to world issues, health issues, facial expressions of individuals around them, and have a strong sense of fair play.
- **Academic Impact:**
 - May have difficulty switching to new content; mind does not work on a 45 minute time schedule; may need to allow more time for in-depth exploration of a topic or completion of a project. When the rest of the class is doing the repetitive work, these students may have the option of research.
 - May argue that discipline is unfair or unjust
 - May exhibit unusual emotional responses to content or discussions

Complexity of Thought:

- Gifted individuals usually thrive on puzzles, multi-step problems and cross-thread ideas
- May multi-task continually, if not in action, definitely in their minds

- Adult sense of conflict, concepts, humor
- **Academic Impact:**
 - Create their own mental gymnastic exercises or new applications beyond what the teacher wants and requires
 - May “monitor” class activities while pursuing a different train of thought in their own minds; miss directions or comments in class
 - Exhibit startling insights and connections to class discussions; teachers may frequently not have time in class to pursue the ideas the student considers valuable
 - May make work more complex than the obvious response expected

Creative Thought:

- This trait does not apply to all gifted individuals. Some may be rigid, precise thinkers and learners.
- Creativity measures may include the following traits:
 - Fluency – flow of many ideas
 - Flexibility – change of category of ideas, applying concepts to different situations
 - Elaboration – adding details to an idea
 - Originality – new idea or a new application for an existing idea
 - Risk Taking – if you don’t risk sharing, no one will know your creative idea
 - Intuition – listening to the “gut” or feelings about a concept
- **Academic Impact:**
 - Creative flow may take more time than classroom situations allow
 - Different ideas may or may not be honored/valued in the classroom setting; may inhibit a natural ability that keeps surfacing
 - May lead classroom discussions/projects in unexpected directions

Social and Emotional Traits:

- Gifted individuals may have better relationships with students older than they are. The peer group may not be a good match.
 - They may “dumb themselves down” to try and fit in with their peers. They overshoot how young to act and may appear immature.
 - Many behavior problems disappear when a student is in an accelerated setting.
 - Friends are chosen on the basis of interest and not necessarily age.
- Individuals may exhibit perfectionistic tendencies.
- Because they think differently than those around them, they may become more reflective and introspective.
- Leadership training is recommended. Gifted students may need help with executive functioning skills: organization, paying attention, finishing work, tolerating frustration, controlling outbursts.
- In later grades, they may need help with study skills. In lower grades, information is learned easily and they do not develop the study skills that other students need to have.

- Many gifted students have poor self-esteem because they know they are different from other students.
- The higher the IQ, the greater the percentage of introverts. Introverts need time alone to recharge and tend not to prefer working in groups. Among the most highly gifted 87% are introverted. In the general population, 77% of the students are extroverts.

Gifted Underachievement (Research by Silverman, 2004)

- Be aware of whether student is underachiever or just a selective consumer
- Unfounded fear of either failure or success
- Being unaccepted by peers
- An undetected learning disability
- An educational setting that does not create:
 - Opportunities for taking calculated risks
 - One that does not build resiliency to challenge
 - The lack of opportunity to build effective study skills
 - The lack of socially acceptable competition

Linda Deal, 2010