Learning Distinctions Between High Achievers and Gifted Learners

Davis School District

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Objective:

To understand learning distinctions between high achievers and gifted learners so that you will be able to use that awareness and knowledge to better meet their academic, social and emotional needs.
Not all high-achieving students are gifted.
Not all gifted students are high achievers.
Ranges of Giftedness

- 115-129 IQ  Mildly Gifted  (+1-2 SD)
- 130-144 IQ  Moderately Gifted  (+2-3 SD)
- 145-159 IQ  Highly Gifted  (+3-4 SD)
- 160+ IQ  Profoundly Gifted  (>4 SD)
IQ Normal Curve

IQ Comparison Site
http://members.shaw.ca/delajara/
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Deviations</th>
<th>-4</th>
<th>-3</th>
<th>-2</th>
<th>-1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wechsler IQ</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford-Binet IQ</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>2.275</td>
<td>15.866</td>
<td>50.00</td>
<td>84.134</td>
<td>97.725</td>
<td>99.865</td>
<td>99.997</td>
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Things to Think About . . .

• Trends in the Bell Curve
• Difference in standard deviations
• Dr. Linda Silverman – IQ findings
• Higher IQ = greater probability of “eccentricities”
High-Achieving Students

Know what it takes to be successful in school and are willing to put in the time and effort.
Giftedness reflects innate, advanced aptitudes that may or may not emerge as exceptional academic talent over time.
Obstacles to Academic Success

• Gifted Under-Achievers ("Underground")

• Twice Exceptional (ADHD, EBD, Autism Spectrum Disorder – Asperger’s, ODD, physical disabilities, etc.)

• Poor Attitude/Effort
## Smart vs. Gifted

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Smart</th>
<th>Gifted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questioning Style</strong></td>
<td>Ask questions that have answers</td>
<td>Ask questions about abstract ideas, concepts and theories</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Speed &amp; Application of Concepts</strong></td>
<td>Learn step-by-step</td>
<td>Jump from step 2 to 10 (showing work in math; tutoring)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Outlook</strong></td>
<td>Get past an upsetting incident fairly easily</td>
<td>Experience heightened, sometimes all-consuming emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Interest</strong></td>
<td>Ask questions and are curious about many things</td>
<td>Show intense curiosity about nearly everything and immerse themselves in areas of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language Ability</strong></td>
<td>Learn new vocabulary easily and choose words typical for their age</td>
<td>Extensive and advanced vocabulary and understand nuances, wordplay and puns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concern with Fairness</strong></td>
<td>State firm opinions about fairness related to personal situations</td>
<td>Show concern about fairness and equity more intensely and on a more global scale</td>
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</table>
A High Achiever vs. A Gifted Learner

from “The Gifted and Talented Child” by Janice Szabos, Maryland Council for Gifted & Talented, Inc.

A High Achiever

Knows the answers
Is Interested
Is attentive
Has good ideas
Works hard
Commits time and effort to learning
Answers questions
Absorbs information
Copies and responds accurately
Is a top student
Needs 6 to 8 repetitions for mastery
Understands ideas
Grasps meaning
Completes assignments
Is a technician
Is a good memorizer
Is receptive
Listens with interest
Prefers sequential presentation of information
Is pleased with his or her own learning

A Gifted Learner

Asks the questions
Is highly curious
Is intellectually engaged
Has original ideas
Performs with ease
May need less time to excel
Responds with detail and unique perspectives
Manipulates information
Creates new and original products
Is beyond his or her age peers
Needs 1 to 2 repetitions for mastery
Constructs abstractions
Draws inferences
Initiates projects
Is an innovator
Is insightful; makes connections with ease
Is intense
Shows strong feelings, opinions, perspectives
Thrives on complexity
Is highly self-critical
Potential Problems Associated with Characteristic Strengths in Gifted Children
Adapted from Clark (2002) and Seagoe (1974)

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; searches for significance
  Asks embarrassing questions; strong willed; excessive in interests; expects same of others

Ability to conceptualize, abstract, synthesize; enjoys problem-solving and intellectual activity
  Rejects or omits details; resists practice or drill; questions teaching procedures

Can see cause-effect relationships
  Difficulty accepting the illogical, such as feelings, traditions, and matters to be taken on faith

Love of truth, equity, and fair play
  Difficulty in being practical; worries 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 verbal proficiency; broad information in advanced areas
  May use words to escape or avoid situations; becomes bored with school and age peers; 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; perfectionistic
Problems Associated with Characteristic Strengths in Gifted Children
Adapted from Clark (2002) and Seagoe (1974)

Keen observer; willing to consider the unusual; seeks new experiences
  Overly intense focus; may be gullible
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; persistent
  Resists interruption; neglects duties or people during periods of focused interest; seen as stubborn
Sensitivity, empathy for others; desire to be accepted by others
  Sensitivity to criticism or peer rejection; expects others to have similar values; need for success and recognition; may feel different and alienated
High energy, alertness, eagerness; periods of intense efforts
  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; non-conformist; may be unconventional
Diverse interests and abilities; versatile
  May appear scattered and disorganized; becomes frustrated 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 “class clown” to gain attention
Dabrowski’s Theory of Overexcitabilities

• Polish psychiatrist developed a theory that has affected our understanding of gifted individuals

• “Overexcitabilities” refers to a person’s heightened response to stimuli

• Excitability seemed to occur in five different areas: Intellectual, imaginalional, emotional, sensual, and psychomotor
Intellectual Overexcitability

- Independent thinkers and keen observers
- Asking probing or endless questions
- Endeavor to solve problems
- Introspective
- Focus on moral concerns and issues of fairness
- Search for understanding and truth
- Avid readers
Imaginational Overexcitability

• May confuse reality with fantasy
• Creative and divergent thinker
• May appear to be “Spaced out”
• Drawn to complex imaginative schemes
• Rich imagination and dramatic perception
• Clearly visualize events
• Mind may wander/daydream
• Robin Williams
Emotional Overexcitability

- Extreme and complex emotions
- Intense feelings
- Worry excessively
- Strong emotional attachments to people, places and things
- Often accused of overreacting
- Express compassion, empathy and sensitivity
- Can frequently display anger, rage or cynicism
Sensual Overexcitability

• Heightened senses
• Unusual sensitivity to music, language and foods
• May object to tags in shirts or seams on socks
• Sensitive to lights; particularly the flicker and buzz of fluorescent lights
• Can be bothered by noise, odors (perfume), texture or taste of certain foods
Psychomotor Overexcitability

• High capacity for being active and energetic
• Love movement; may jiggle a foot or leg
• Rapid speech, fervent enthusiasm, intense physical activity
• Talk and act compulsively
• Show intense drive and competitiveness
• Display nervous habits; likely to fidget and twitch
• Exhausting to be around
Dabrowski’s Theory of Overexcitabilities has added to our understanding of how strengths of gifted – particularly the more highly gifted – can also cause difficulties or potential problems, especially if these characteristics are not recognized or understood by parents and educators.
Gifted individuals view the world in different ways than others, and their thoughts, actions and feelings are more intense. It has been said that an exceptionally gifted individual sees the world as if she is looking through an electron microscope, as compared with normal vision. They see what others do not see, and what others cannot even imagine.