



This is the first *eTips* message in our series on recognizing and responding to highly able students at the intermediate level -- generally 3rd through 5th/6th grades. In this message, we will list key characteristics typical of gifted children in these grades and direct you to a simple method for collecting information about children who show a number of these characteristics.

Here is a list of characteristics you will often see in very able children. It is probable they will display many of these characteristics though not necessarily all of them. Sometimes you will be able to recognize the characteristic as a positive trait. However, it's possible to recognize exceptional ability through problem behaviors as well as positive characteristics, so look for both.

Characteristics	Concomitant Problems
<p><b>Learning Rate</b></p> <p>Learns very quickly; understands and processes information rapidly; thinks quickly; wants challenge, complexity</p>	<p>Becomes resistive to routine and drill/practice; becomes distracted; frustrated with inactivity; becomes impatient and/or dismissive of others who don't learn as quickly</p>
<p><b>Memory</b></p> <p>Has keen memory; has large store of information</p>	<p>Boredom with regular curriculum; doesn't like waiting; sometimes resistant to group work</p>
<p><b>Verbal Ability</b></p> <p>Strong language development; high-level verbal ability; unusually mature and/or advanced vocabulary</p>	<p>Dominates discussion; brings in more information than might be needed; impatient with others; interjects humor, sometimes inappropriately</p>
<p><b>Curiosity</b></p> <p>Curious; asks lots of questions, especially "how" and "why"</p>	<p>Probing, sometimes to point of being disrespectful of others; becomes frustrated or loses interest when doesn't get answers</p>
<p><b>Concentration and Attention</b></p> <p>Unusual intensity and/or concentration; can attend for long periods on tasks of interest</p>	<p>Difficulty pulling away from a task of interest; difficulty making transitions to different activities or subjects</p>
<p><b>Creativity</b></p> <p>Tends to be very creative; has strong imagination; able to make unusual connections among objects and/or ideas</p>	<p>Sometimes nonconforming; "marches to own drumbeat"; might not follow directions; sometimes seen as weird or odd by others</p>

Characteristics	Concomitant Problems
<p><b>Intensity and Sensitivity</b></p> <p>Mental, psychological, physical and/or emotional intensity or sensitivity</p>	<p>"Asynchronous" in development (e.g., cognitively advanced but emotionally immature, etc.); may become very emotional -- cry, become angry -- when frustrated; reacts strongly to perceived injustice or unfairness</p>
<p><b>Perfectionism</b></p> <p>Has very high standards, internalized sense of excellence; perfectionistic</p>	<p>Unreasonably hard on self in judging quality of product or performance; may shut down instead of performing less than is expected by self or others</p>
<p><b>Motivation</b></p> <p>Strongly motivated in areas of strength, interest, or passion; persistent; shows unusual perseverance in difficult tasks that are personally interesting and challenging</p>	<p>May appear uninterested and/or uncooperative in regular school curriculum if not sufficiently challenged; appears to perform below potential in areas outside interest; may even become unmotivated if bored or under-challenged</p>
<p><b>Problem Solving</b></p> <p>Strong intuitive ability, especially in identifying problems and solutions</p>	<p>Loses interest in learning that doesn't relate to solving real problems; not motivated to come up with "right" or textbook answer; prefers in-depth, open-ended problem solving tasks</p>

### Why is it important to recognize high ability children in the general classroom program?

In their special learning needs, gifted children are as far from the average as children with disabilities or other learning challenges. We know that children with special needs require modifications and/or accommodations in their curriculum and instruction in order to get the most out of their education and their personal development.

For gifted children, the characteristics and specific strengths that help define them suggest needs that should be addressed in a classroom program that is appropriate for them. The next set of eTips will focus on the needs that arise from the characteristics above and what classroom teachers can do to address those needs.

In the meantime, check out this simple method for documenting who in your class shows these characteristics, at <https://sites.google.com/site/cogtacademy/resources>.