

12 Traits of Giftedness

(Adapted from material from the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and Mary Ruth Coleman, Ph.D., University of North Carolina.)

| Trait, Aptitude, or Behavior | General Description | How It May Look |
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| Motivation Evidence of desire to learn. | Internal drive or encouragement that initiates, directs, or sustains individual or group behavior in order to satisfy a need or attain a goal. | Demonstrates persistence in pursuing or completing self-selected tasks (may be culturally influenced); evident in school or non-school activities. Enthusiastic learner; has aspirations to be somebody, to do something. |
| Interests Intense, sometimes unusual, interests | Activities, avocations, objects, etc. that have special worth or significance and are given special attention. | Unusual or advanced interests, topic, or activity; self-starter; pursues and activity unceasingly beyond the group. |
| Communication Skills Highly expressive with words, numbers, or symbols | Transmission and reception of signals or meanings through a system of symbols (codes, gestures, language, and numbers). | Unusual ability to communicate (verbally, nonverbally, physically, artistically, symbolically); uses particularly apt examples, illustrations, or elaborations. |
| Problem-Solving Ability Effective, often inventive, strategies for recognizing and solving problems. | Process of determining a correct sequence of alternatives leading to a desired goal or to successful completion of a performance task. | Unusual ability to devise or adopt a systematic strategy to solve problems and to change the strategy if it is not working; creates new designs; inventor. |
| Memory Large storehouse of information on school or non-school topics. | Exceptional ability to retain and retrieve information. | Already knows; needs only 1-2 repetitions for mastery; has a wealth of information about school and non-school topics; pays attention to details; manipulates information. |
| Inquiry/Curiosity Questions, experiments, explores. | Method or process of seeking knowledge, understanding or information. | Asks unusual questions for age; plays around with ideas; extensive exploratory behaviors directed toward eliciting information about materials, devices, or situations. |
| Insight Quickly grasps new concepts; sees connections; senses deeper meanings | Sudden discovery of correct solution following attempts based primarily on trial and error; putting disparate elements together in unexpected ways. | Exceptional ability to draw inferences; appears to be a good guesser; is keenly observant; heightened capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships, integration of ideas and disciplines. |
| Reasoning Logical approaches to figuring out solutions. | Highly conscious, directed, controlled, active, intentional forward-looking, and goal-oriented thought. | Ability to make generalizations and use metaphors and analogies; can think things through in a logical manner; critical thinker; ability to think things through and come up with a plausible answer. |
| Imagination/Creativity Produces many ideas; highly original | Process of forming mental images of objects; qualities, situations, or relationships which aren't immediately apparent to the senses; problem solving through nontraditional patterns of thinking. | Shows exceptional ingenuity in using everyday materials; is keenly observant; has wild, seemingly silly ideas; fluent, flexible producer of ideas; highly curious. |
| Humor Conveys and picks up on humor well. | Ability to synthesize key ideas or problems in complex situations in a humorous way; exceptional sense of timing in words or gestures. | Keen sense of humor that may be gentle or hostile; large accumulation of information about emotions; capacity for seeing unusual; uncommon emotional depth; openness to experiences; sensory awareness. |
| Intensity (“Overexcitabilities”) Strength of reactions, responses, behaviors. (The term “overexcitabilities” comes from Polish psychologist Dabrowski.) | Very Strong, even extreme, responses to stimuli in five areas: emotional, intellectual, sensory, psychomotor, and imagination. | Intense desire for experiences in the area(s) of overexcitability; powerful emotions; seeks intellectual stimulation; sensory experiences evoke strong responses; constant or repetitive movement or gesturing; intense fantasy life; may need creative outlets for intensity. |
| Sensitivity Strong reactions to emotional stimuli | Events and situations in the affective and social domains elicit a stronger response than usual. | Strong sense of compassion; keen sense of justice; empathy; moral and ethical sensibilities; sense of being “different” socially; existential worrying; often overly self-critical. |