Characteristics and Behaviors of the Gifted

- Uses an enriched vocabulary
- Asks many thought-provoking questions
- Expresses unusual ideas
- Has a wide range of interests
- Uses complex sentences
- Acts independently
- Displays curiosity
- Possesses leadership qualities
- Functions at a high energy level
- Has long attention spans
- Reads at an early age
- Understands concept of time
- Engages in self-directed activities
- Is sensitive to feelings of others
- Has a keen sense of humor
- Is able to conceptualize
- Learns skills rapidly, without repetition
- Retains and uses information effectively
- Wants to know what makes things “tick”
- Enjoys learning
- Reasons well
- Is a perfectionist
- Prefers older companions or adults
- Has facility with numbers

The Gifted Student

One who has superior intellectual development and is capable of high performance. These students require educational programs and experiences different from and/or in addition to those provided by the regular school program.
Is My Child Gifted?

Often gifted students—those who are motivated, high achievers—are thought by their parents and teachers to be gifted. However, a truly gifted student will demonstrate certain unique characteristics. Listed below are behaviors exhibited by both bright and gifted students. The majority of a bright child's behaviors will be found in the left column, while the truly gifted child will exhibit behaviors from both columns depending on the task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bright Child</th>
<th>Gifted Learner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knows the answers</td>
<td>Asks the questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is interested</td>
<td>Is highly curious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is attentive</td>
<td>Is mentally and physically involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has good ideas</td>
<td>Has wild, silly ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works hard</td>
<td>Plays around, yet tests well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers the questions</td>
<td>Discusses in detail, elaborates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top group</td>
<td>Beyond the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens with interest</td>
<td>Shows strong feelings and opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learns with ease</td>
<td>Already knows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 repetitions</td>
<td>1-2 repetitions for mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands ideas</td>
<td>Constructs abstractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys peers</td>
<td>Prefers adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grasps the meaning</td>
<td>Draws inferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completes assignments</td>
<td>Initiates projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is receptive</td>
<td>Is intense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies accurately</td>
<td>Creates a new design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys school</td>
<td>Enjoys learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absorbs information</td>
<td>Manipulates information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>Inventor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good memorizer</td>
<td>Good guesser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys sequential presentation</td>
<td>Thrives on complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is alert</td>
<td>Is keenly observant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is pleased with own learning</td>
<td>Is highly self-critical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inquisitive nature

Creative problem solving Artistic

Passionate interests

Intuitive

Learns new material rapidly

High energy level

Advanced vocabulary for their age

Exceptional memorization abilities

Long attention span

Intense focus

Keen observer and questioner

Independent: prefers individualized work
INQUISITIVE NATURE

While most children spend their time asking “Why?” the gifted learner is not satisfied by answers that seek to appease rather than focus on the issue at hand. Such students may continue to ask questions until they reach a level of satisfaction with the response.

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Often these children can generate numerous, innovative, or even unusual solutions, which they may apply to debates with their parents. In other cases, a child may result in an unorthodox response that seems entirely reasonable to the child.

INDEPENDENT AND PREFERS INDIVIDUALIZED WORK

While many students enjoy group activities, gifted learners may thrive on independent activities in which they are given a goal and the offer of assistance as needed. Students who enjoy this type of work will actually work harder when allowed to work independently. It is important to note, however, that this is not a license for allowing the high ability learner to languish in a corner while the rest of the class moves forward. The student should be assisted with goal-setting and decision-making, as well as research skills.

Keen Observer and Questioner

These children often display an early interest in national and world events. They may also call attention to inconsistencies that they see demonstrated in policies. Likewise, they may question authority, not only in school and society, but in parents and teachers too.
**EXCEPTIONAL MEMORIZATION ABILITIES**

Students with exceptional memories may find school quite easy, especially when their teachers require knowledge rather than analysis. However, many bright students do not have exceptional memories; and students with exceptional memories may not be proficient with analysis and evaluation.

**PASSIONATE INTERESTS**

These students often become real experts on anything that interests them. They have the ability to develop and retain storehouses of information about their interests. It is not unusual for a child to be all-consuming in his/her quest for understanding a subject and subsequently completely drop the topic as a passion because his/her interest has been quenched—and suddenly a new interest will replace the old one.

**LEARNS NEW MATERIAL RAPIDLY AND GETS BORED BY REPETITION**

For the student who is a “quick study,” the kinds of repetitive experiences found in some classrooms may result in the student's mentally checking out of the conversation. As a result, he or she may appear to be disengaged, distracted, or frustrated depending upon the context. This may eventually lead to underachievement.

**HIGH ENERGY LEVEL (REDUCED NEED FOR SLEEP)**

Some gifted children are “no nap” babies and light and short sleepers. Their parents may be jealous of mothers and fathers whose babies sleep like babies. Such students may appear to be hyperactive: This pattern is referred to as over excitabilities, which may be found to be typical in very bright children (Rinn & Bishop, 2015).
**INTENSE FOCUS**

Students with intense focus may consider an idea in such depth that they may appear to be daydreaming while the class moves on to other topics. These students may appear unwilling to transition from one subject to another at the same pace as their classmates. Yet the constant moving from topic to topic based on the passing of the hands of a clock may appear to such students as unreasonable and unnecessarily painful.

**INTUITIVE**

These children can often see through surface level statements, challenging their adults to deal very directly with them. They innately grasp whatever is under the surface, with no apparent clues.

**LONG ATTENTION SPAN**

Students with long attention spans may demonstrate this trait inconsistently; they may appear extremely hyperactive except when participating in their interest area; when suddenly, they can concentrate for three hours on a single topic. In such a context, it is quite likely that gifted students become so immersed in the process that they lose track of everything going on around them. Many have this skill, but in the context of school schedules, students who can concentrate deeply may be put temporarily at a disadvantage when students have to move quickly from one subject to another based on passing time.

**INTENSE FOCUS**

Exceptional capability or potential for critical thinking, creative problem solving, humor, independent/original thinking, and/or products.