

# Learning Distinctions Between High Achievers and Gifted Learners



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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

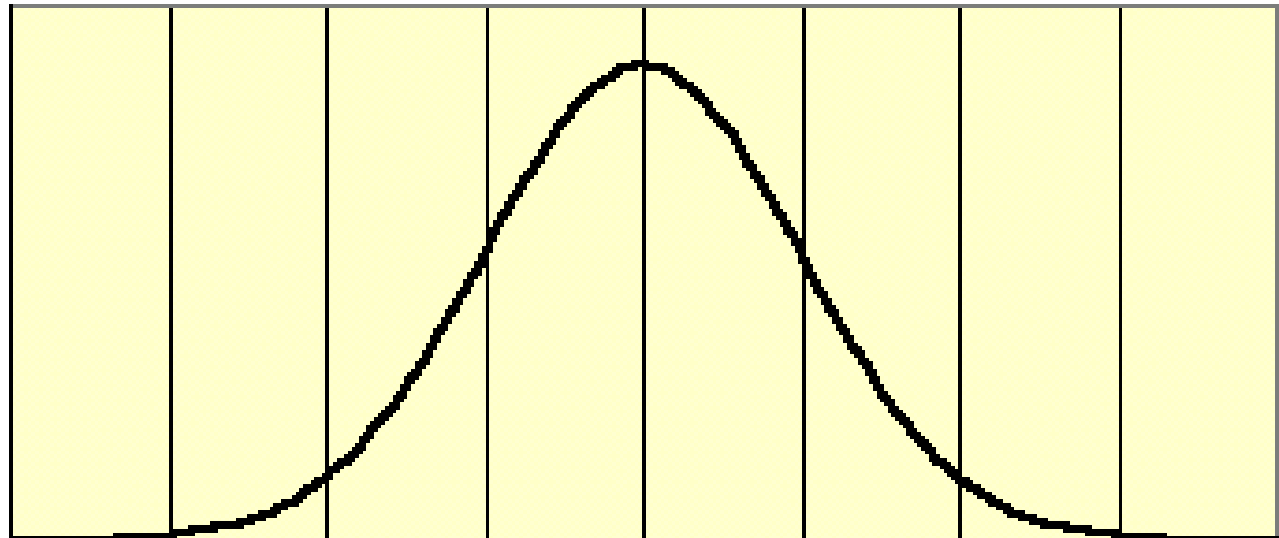
- **115-129 IQ**      **Mildly Gifted**      **(+1-2 SD)**
- **130-144 IQ**      **Moderately Gifted**      **(+2-3 SD)**
- **145-159 IQ**      **Highly Gifted**      **(+3-4 SD)**
- **160+ IQ**      **Profoundly Gifted**      **(>4 SD)**

IQ Comparison Site

<http://members.shaw.ca/delajara/>

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## IQ Normal Curve



Standard Deviations	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
Wechsler IQ	40	55	70	85	100	115	130	145	160
Stanford-Binet IQ	36	52	68	84	100	116	132	148	164
Cumulative %	0.003	0.135	2.275	15.866	50.00	84.134	97.725	99.865	99.997

# 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

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

# 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 Seago (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, imaginal, 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

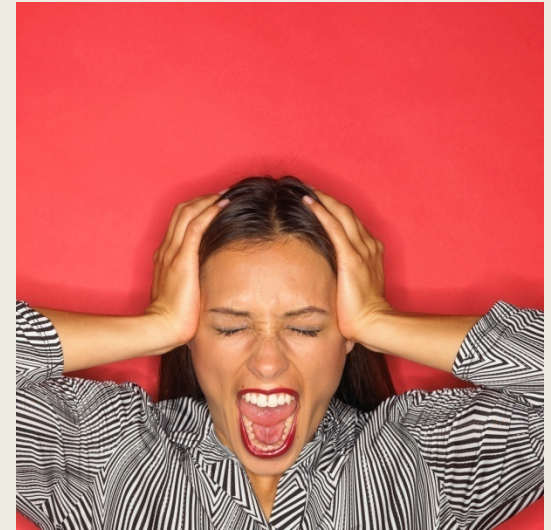
- May confuse reality with fantasy
- Creative and divergent thinker
- May appear to be “Spaced out”
- Drawn to complex imaginative schemes
- Rich imagination and dramatic perception
- Clearly visualize events
- Mind may wander/daydream
- Robin Williams





# 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.

