


Many Faces of Gifted





James T. Webb, Ph.D.
Great Potential Press
1650 N. Kolb Rd., Suite 200
Tucson, AZ 85715
520-777-6161
www.greatpotentialpress.com
jwebb@greatpotentialpress.com

First, What Do We Mean by the Term Gifted?



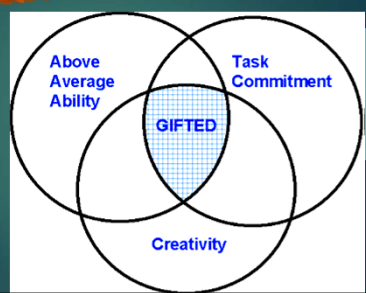
"I'm inquisitive?
What does inquisitive mean?"

Defining Giftedness

Marland Report (1972)

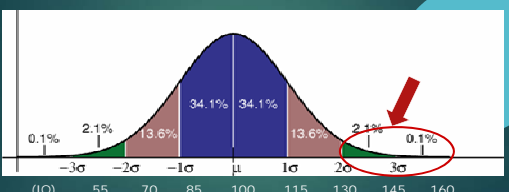
- General intellectual ability
- Specific academic aptitude
- Creative or productive thinkers
- Leadership ability
- Visual or performing arts
- Psychomotor ability (since deleted)

Identification



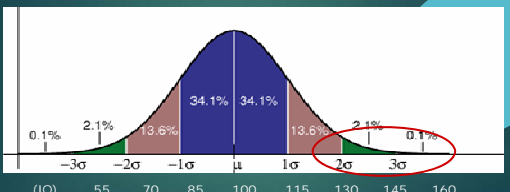
Most Schools Focus on Intellectual and Academic Giftedness and Try to Estimate Potential in These Areas Using Tests.

(Tests are simply shorthand attempts to measure what we could observe, if we had enough time and the proper settings. We need to focus on behaviors as much as on test scores.)



Mean= 100 Standard Deviation= 15

Although most schools have used the upper 3-5% (2 standard deviations above the mean), now there is good reason to broaden this to consider the upper 10% (1.5 standard deviations above the mean).




Mean= 100 Standard Deviation= 15

Are Gifted Children the Ones Who Achieve in School?

7

Some Are, but Others Do Not Do Well in School, but Yet They Are Still Gifted



Profiles of the Talented and Gifted

(Betts & Nelhart, 2010)

8


- ▶ **Type I, Successful:** High achiever; does not take risks; accepts and conforms; is dependent; liked by teachers and parents.
- ▶ **Type II, Creative:** Questions system and challenges teacher; is direct; is creative; works when it seems appropriate; emotionally labile; may fail in school.
- ▶ **Type III, Underground:** Denies talent, resists challenges; unwilling to take risks; wants to belong socially; changes friends; drops gifted/advanced classes; seen as average.
- ▶ **Type IV, At-Risk:** Creates crises and disruptions; thrill seeking; has intermittent attendance; doesn't complete tasks; pursues outside interests; seems "spaced out" in class; is burned out; is defensive and criticizes others.
- ▶ **Type V, Twice/Multi Exceptional:** Produces inconsistent work; disorganized; low academic self-concept; gifted and LD or ADHD, or handicapped; seems average or below average; prone to discouragement.
- ▶ **Type VI, Autonomous:** Self-confident; works independently; has appropriate social skills; sets own goals; follows through; is creative; stands up for convictions; willing to fail and learn from it.



How rare are gifted children and adults?

9

Are they likely to have a "minority" experience?



Level of Prevalence of Gifted Children


10

Level	IQ range	Prevalence
Mildly	115 - 129	1:6 to 1:40
Moderately	130 - 144	1:40 to 1:1,000
Highly	145 - 159	1:1,000 to 1:10,000
Exceptionally	160 - 179	1:10,000 to 1:1 million
Profoundly	180 +	Fewer than 1:1 million

"...the range of scores of children in the top 1% in IQ—from 135 to more than 200—is as broad as the range of scores from the 2nd percentile (IQ 64) to the 98th (IQ 132)."

(Boland & Gross, 2007, p. 159)

But the curve is not smooth; there is "bump" on the IQ curve at about IQ 140 - 145.




Okay, gifted children and adults are rare, but how unique are they?

11

"There is little evidence...that gifted children or adults have unique temperaments...(and) there are large within-group differences in temperament...that give rise to even larger differences in affective, conative, and personality characteristics." (Moon, 2007, p. 15)

"At the same time, there is some research that suggest that groups of gifted individuals possess some social, emotional, and personality traits in greater abundance than the norm." (Moon, 2007, p. 15)


"The characteristics that accompany giftedness are an intensified form of human traits. Intelligence, sensitivity, self-criticism, and emotionality occur in heightened forms in individuals." (Mendaglio, p. 44)



Frequent Behaviors of Gifted Children

12

- ▶ Unusually large vocabularies
- ▶ Complex sentence structures
- ▶ Greater comprehension of language nuances
- ▶ Longer attention span, persistence
- ▶ Intensity of feelings and actions
- ▶ Wide range of interests
- ▶ Strong curiosity; limitless questions
- ▶ Like to experiment; puts ideas or things together in unusual ways



Frequent Behaviors of Gifted Children (continued)

13

- ▶ Learn basic skills quickly and with less practice than peers
- ▶ Largely self-taught reading and writing skills as pre-schoolers
- ▶ Unusually good memory; retain information
- ▶ Unusual sense of humor; may use puns
- ▶ Like to organize people and things, and typically devise complex games
- ▶ Imaginary playmates (as preschoolers)

Four Endogenous Factors Particularly Influence the Expression of Giftedness, as Well As Educational, Social, and Emotional Functioning





1. Level of Giftedness
2. Asynchronous Development
3. Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities
4. Thinking and Learning Styles

- ▶ The higher the child's overall ability level, the more these factors influence the behaviors.


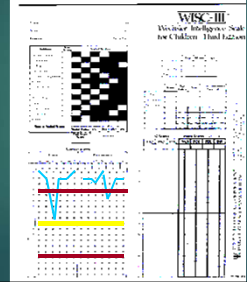

Level of Giftedness

Ruf (2003)

Levels of Giftedness	Approximate Score Range	Descriptive Designation
Level One	117 - 129	Moderately Gifted 120-124/Gifted 125-129
Level Two	125 - 135	Highly Gifted
Level Three	130 - 140	Exceptionally Gifted
Level Four	135 - 141	Exceptionally to Profoundly Gifted
Level Five	141+	Exceptionally to Profoundly Gifted

Asynchronous Development

Learning/Thinking Styles

<p>Auditory-Sequential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prefers verbal explanations; uses language to remember ▶ Processes information sequentially; deals with one task at a time ▶ Produces ideas logically; prefers analyzing activities ▶ Prefers concrete thinking tasks; likes structured experiences ▶ Prefers proper working materials and proper settings for working ▶ Prefers to learn facts and details ▶ Approaches problems seriously 	<p>Visual-Spatial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prefers visual explanations; uses images to remember ▶ Processes information holistically; deals with several tasks at a time ▶ Produces ideas intuitively; prefers synthesizing activities ▶ Prefers abstract thinking tasks; likes open, fluid experiences ▶ Improvises with materials available; creates own structure ▶ Prefers to gain general overview ▶ Approaches problems playfully
---	---

Dabrowski Overexcitabilities



- ▶ **Intellectual** (Avid Reading, Curiosity, Asking Probing Questions, Concentration, Problem Solving, Introspection, Theoretical Thinking)
- ▶ **Imaginational** (Fantasy Play, Animistic and Imaginative Thinking, Vivid Visual Recall, Daydreaming, Love of Drama, Use of Metaphor)
- ▶ **Emotional** (Unusual Sensitivity and Responses; Concern for Others, Timidity and Shyness, Fear and Anxiety, Difficulty Adjusting to New Environments, Intensity of Feeling)
- ▶ **Psychomotor** (Marked Enthusiasm, Rapid Speech, Compulsive Chattering; Surplus of Energy, Nervous Habits, Impulsive Actions)
- ▶ **Sensual** (Heightened Awareness of Senses; Sensory Pleasures, Appreciation of Sensory Aspects of Experiences, Avoidance of Overstimulation)

Characteristic Strengths Can Create Problems

- ▶ Acquires information quickly *vs.* impatient with slowness of others
- ▶ Inquisitive attitude *vs.* asks embarrassing questions; strong willed
- ▶ Seeks systems and strives for order *vs.* seen as bossy or domineering
- ▶ Creative and inventive *vs.* may disrupt plans of others
- ▶ Intense concentration *vs.* resists interruption; seen as stubborn
- ▶ High energy *vs.* frustrated with inactivity
- ▶ Diverse interests *vs.* seen as scattered
- ▶ Strong sense of humor *vs.* humor may disrupt classroom or work
- ▶ Keen observer *vs.* sees inconsistencies and may become disillusioned

Identification, Usually by Schools, Focuses on Intelligence, but Does Intelligence Predict Eminence or Stellar Achievement?

- ▶ Intelligence, in general, predicts academic achievement - but not life achievement
- ▶ Life achievement is more a matter of "deliberate practice" that enhances myelin connections (Coyne, 2009) and amount of practice (10 years or 10,000 hours) to be an expert. (Ericsson, 1996)
- ▶ Genetics effects differ depending on environment. (Nisbett, 2009)
 - ▶ Effect is about 10% genetic in poor families
 - ▶ About 50% genetic in more enriched settings
- ▶ Although a certain amount of innate ability seems necessary, the biggest single factor appears to be motivation, which Ellen Winner (2009) called a "rage to master."
- ▶ In other words, the social and emotional aspects, combined with opportunity, result in brain changes and skill development.

What Do Gifted Children Need?

21

In my opinion, there are clear needs in five areas to help gifted children obtain success, and all involve social or emotional aspects.

1. Home and cultural environment that is nurturing
2. School educational climate that supports and matches the child
3. Flexible educational programs
4. Recognition and support of twice-exceptional gifted (2e)
5. Education of health care and counseling professionals to reduce misdiagnosis

Frequent Social, Emotional, and Health Issues

22

- ▶ Boredom (a low-grade anger, with hurt underneath)
- ▶ Impatience
- ▶ Underachievement
- ▶ Peer issues
- ▶ Sibling rivalry
- ▶ Power struggles with parents and teachers
- ▶ Feelings of loneliness
- ▶ Idealism and cynicism; excessive self-criticism
- ▶ Stress and perfectionism; avoidance of risk-taking
- ▶ Others have unrealistic expectations about them; multipotentiality
- ▶ Their judgment lags behind their intellectual abilities
- ▶ Misdiagnosis and overlooked dual diagnoses
- ▶ Health and behavioral problems
 - ▶ Learning disabilities (asynchronous; "twice-exceptional") (Wormald, 2015)
 - ▶ Asthma (Winner, 1997)
 - ▶ Allergies (Winner, 1997)
 - ▶ Eating Disorders (Kerr & Kurpius, 2004)
 - ▶ Reactive Hypoglycemia (Webb, et al., 2004)
 - ▶ Alcohol consumption (Kanzawa & Heilberg, 2010)
- ▶ Searching for meaning and existential depression

Recognizing and Supporting the Many Faces of Gifted

- ▶ Remember that there are domains within each general area of giftedness, and children are not equally gifted across those domains.
- ▶ The brighter the child is overall, the greater the likelihood of unequal ability and proficiency across the domain areas (asynchronous development).
- ▶ This implies a need for educators to match the child's competence with the challenge in that domain.
- ▶ In addition to supporting domains, school systems and educators must meet special needs that arise from other factors – level of ability, personality, twice-exceptional, cultural aspects, etc.

Yes, Gifted Children Do Have Many Faces and Special Needs! Being Bright Is Not Enough

24

- ▶ They are exceptional, but with different levels in different areas.
- ▶ Their behaviors often require special understanding.
- ▶ They need appropriate differentiation (and often special) educational placements.
- ▶ Their social and emotional needs require understanding and special approaches in:
 - ▶ Understanding their intensity and sensitivity
 - ▶ Peer relation issues
 - ▶ Sibling issues
 - ▶ Motivation and Underachievement
 - ▶ Perfectionism
 - ▶ Communication issues
 - ▶ Discipline and self-discipline
 - ▶ Creativity and questioning of traditions
 - ▶ Idealism and depression
 - ▶ Career guidance
 - ▶ Feeling that they are connected with the world

25

But what about after childhood?

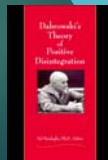
26



Well, I'm 21. I guess I'm through
with all my stages.

27

Gifted Continues into Adulthood. You Don't Just
Outgrow It, and There Are Advantages and
Challenges to Lifespan Intensity



28

Things We Know about Bright Adults

As they get older, they:

- are more likely to be idealists.
- seek complexity and engage in metacognition.
- are more likely to reach higher levels of moral development.
- are more intense and more sensitive (Dabrowski OEs).
- see non-traditional ways of acting and being.
- are likely to question or challenge tradition.
- search for consistency and "universal truths" in themselves and their environment.
- are more likely to raise questions about life meaning and purpose.
- These characteristics make them more prone to disillusionment.

29

Do Any of These Sound Familiar?

- ▶ You have so much energy! I can't believe how much you do. Don't you ever slow down?
- ▶ Why are you always asking "why?" You're analyzing this to death!
- ▶ I can't understand why you won't even taste that! (or) Why do you have to have tags cut out of your clothes?
- ▶ Why are you always looking for another solution to every problem? Why can't you just settle on one good answer and get on with it?
- ▶ You're too sensitive! Why do you let all those things bother you? Why do you always take everything to heart?

30

Some Myths about Bright Adults

- ▶ Bright adults are aware of their intelligence, and know how it impacts their lives.
- ▶ Their intelligence gives them everything they really need to succeed.
- ▶ Their brightness is always prized by their families.
- ▶ Their intellectual abilities are always an asset with their coworkers and supervisors
- ▶ They should succeed in all areas of life they enter.
- ▶ They have personal, family, and social lives that are more stable and satisfying.
- ▶ They naturally enjoy being leaders and assuming extra responsibility for others.

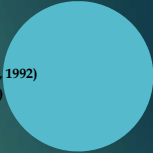
Doesn't Success Help? What Is Success?

31

Academic?


- Presidential Scholars research (Kaufmann, 1992)
- Valedictorian research (Arnold, 1995)

Not necessarily...



32

*Success is something that gives our lives **meaning**.*



The Meaningful Things (Rohrer, 2002)

33

- ▶ Personal relationships
- ▶ Altruism
- ▶ Religion and religious activities
- ▶ Creative activities
- ▶ Personal growth
- ▶ Meeting basic needs
- ▶ Financial security
- ▶ Leisure activities
- ▶ Personal achievement
- ▶ Leaving a legacy
- ▶ Enduring values or ideals
- ▶ Traditions and culture
- ▶ Social/political causes
- ▶ Humanistic concerns
- ▶ Hedonistic activities
- ▶ Material possessions
- ▶ A relationship with nature



Being a Gifted Adult often Means...

34

- ▶ Feeling impatient and dissatisfied.
- ▶ Being criticized for your idealism, intensity and sensitivity throughout your life.
- ▶ Never quite understanding why others don't understand...
 - who you are,
 - how you think, and
 - how you feel.
- ▶ But also, living life to a degree that regularly rewards you with peak experiences, great satisfaction and joy.



The Paradox of Lifespan Intensity


35

Either:

- ▶ Living life to the hilt, immersing yourself fully in whatever you are doing, and seeking to do things that are meaningful,

OR

- ▶ Living a constrained life of quiet desperation, concealing who you are and all your deepest thoughts and feelings.



Being a Gifted Adult Does Bring Challenges, and Can Result in Problems in Several Areas

36

- ▶ Marital expectations and communications
- ▶ Expectations and relationships with children
- ▶ Dissatisfaction with co-workers
- ▶ Discontent with self



37

- Disintegration is likely to result, and existential depression can be a main component
- If a person understands issues involved for gifted adults, the disintegration is more likely to become a positive disintegration.

The first step toward enlightenment is disillusionment.

38



39

Bright minds are more likely to have higher expectations, to see how things might be, and to be lonely idealists.

How can we help them – and ourselves – find Hope amidst the disillusionment?

How do we make sense out our world?

15 Not-So-Healthy Coping Styles that Foster Illusions

40

- ▶ You can avoid being disillusioned if you just lower your expectations. Then you won't be disappointed.
- ▶ Trust only yourself because of past disillusionments. This will leave you very lonely, though.
- ▶ Magical thinking to avoid self-examination or discomfort.
- ▶ Knowing that you have "truth" and that your beliefs are the "correct" ones.
- ▶ Trying to control your life, or at least label every aspect of it.
- ▶ Keeping busy to avoid thinking.
- ▶ Actively choosing not to think about life matters.
- ▶ Clinging to "things."
- ▶ Becoming narcissistic.
- ▶ Learning to not care.
- ▶ Numbing your mind.
- ▶ Seeking novelty and adrenaline rushes.
- ▶ Camouflaging to keep others from knowing you.
- ▶ Withdrawal and detachment.
- ▶ Anger because things are not as they "should be."

13 Healthier Coping Styles that Go Beyond Illusions

41

- ▶ Creating your own life script.
- ▶ Becoming involved in causes with other idealists.
- ▶ Using bibliotherapy and journaling for perspective.
- ▶ Maintaining a sense of humor.
- ▶ Touching and feeling connected.
- ▶ Developing authentic relationships.
- ▶ Compartmentalizing.
- ▶ Letting go of tangibles, hurts, possessiveness (*My Dinner with Andre*).
- ▶ Living in the present moment; mindfulness
- ▶ Learning and practicing optimism and resiliency.
- ▶ Mentoring and teaching
- ▶ Focusing on the continuity of generations.
- ▶ "Rippling" – concentric circles of influence that affect others for years.

Tasks for Bright Adults

42


- Know yourself
- Accept yourself
- Find sources to nurture yourself
- Know that your worth extends beyond your roles
- Keep your life focus on principles and values, rather than people
- Know that you may make others uncomfortable
- Realize that you may experience periods of disintegration, and try to make them positive.

Giftedness: The exceptional that is the exception.

43

- ▶ Gifted individuals defy classification & expectations at any age.
- ▶ Their individuality overrides any generalizations.
- ▶ Gifted adults deal with the advantages and challenges of their overexcitabilities throughout their lifespan.
- ▶ Through greater self-understanding and by finding kindred spirits to share life's journey, the probabilities are good that gifted adults can:
 - Meet the challenges of their intensity,
 - Enjoy the advantages of it, and
 - Lead satisfying, meaningful, rich & fulfilling lives.

You can't help
getting older,
but you don't have
to get **old.**



44

Dreams

45

"Hold fast to dreams,
for if dreams die,
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams.
For if dreams go,
Life is a barren field
Covered with snow."

Langston Hughes

Recommended Readings

- *Academic Advocacy for Gifted Children: A Parent's Complete Guide* (Gilman, 2008).
- *Cradles of Eminence: Childhoods of More Than 700 Famous Men and Women* (Goertzel, Goertzel, and Hansen, 2003).
- *Gifted Education in 21 European Countries: Inventory and Perspective*. (Mónks & Pflöger, February 2005).
- *Living with Intensity* (Daniels & Piechowski, 2009).
- *Misdiagnosis and Dual Diagnoses of Gifted Children and Adults* (Webb, Amend, Webb, Goerss, Beljan, & Olenchak, 2005).

Recommended Readings

- *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children* (Webb, Gore, Amend, DeVries, 2007).
- *Searching for Meaning: Idealism, Bright Minds, Disillusionment, and Hope* (Webb, 2013)
- *Smart Boys: Talent, Manhood, and the Search for Meaning* (Kerr and Cohn, 2001).
- *Smart Girls in the 21st Century: Understanding talented girls and women.* (Kerr & McKay, 2014).
- *What Educators Can Learn from Gifted Adults.*
www.davidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10023.aspx (Kaufmann, 1992).
- *Worldwide Provision to Develop Gifts and Talents.* (Freeman, Raffan, & Warwick, 2010).