

**TISHOMINGO COUNTY SCHOOLS**  
**Information Regarding**  
**Gifted Learners for**  
**School Faculties, Parents, and Others**





### Introduction

The staff of the Gifted Education Program for Tishomingo County Schools has compiled the following information on giftedness. It is our hope the information will be a valuable resource. This is a work in progress that will be updated on a regular basis. Please feel free to contact any teacher of the gifted, the gifted director, or the gifted contact person if further assistance is desired.



### What is the purpose of gifted education programs?

Gifted children have unique intelligence with exceptional abilities and high potential. Because of these learning needs, a different learning experience, not available in the general education setting, is necessary. Gifted Education Programs pull gifted learners into small groups for up to five hours each week. The goal is to equip them with skills to reach their potential and to support their intellectual, social, and emotional development.

### How is eligibility for gifted education programs determined?

Anyone can refer a student for a gifted program assessment. This begins the referral to placement process. The school district gathers evidence of the student's intellectual abilities. If requirements are met, the student is given an individual intelligence test with a licensed professional. If the student meets the requirements for gifted eligibility, they are placed in the gifted education program.



❖ Find the following information regarding the Gifted Education Program (GEP) on TCSD's website:

- Go to the TCSD webpage.
- Click on ***For Parents***.
- Click on ***Gifted Program***. The following is found there.
  - Welcome (Brochure with basic info)
  - Gifted Program Beliefs
  - Goals and Objectives
  - Referral to Placement Guide
  - *Regulations for Gifted Education Programs*
  - Resources
  - *Standards for the Gifted Education Programs*
  - *Outcomes for Intellectually Gifted Education Programs* (This is the curriculum for the GEP.)
  - Procedures for Borrowing Materials
  - Professional Development Materials



## Characteristics

### Traits of Giftedness

No gifted individual is exactly the same, each with his own unique patterns and traits. There are many traits that gifted individuals have in common, but no gifted learner exhibits traits in every area. This list of traits may help you better understand whether or not your child is gifted

Cognitive	Creative	Affective	Behavioral
Keen power of abstraction	Creativeness and inventiveness	Unusual emotional depth and intensity	Spontaneity
Interest in problem-solving and applying concepts	Keen sense of humor	Sensitivity or empathy to the feelings of others	Boundless enthusiasm
Voracious and early reader	Ability for fantasy	High expectations of self and others, often leading to feelings of frustration	Intensely focused on passions—resists changing activities when engrossed in own interests
Large vocabulary	Openness to stimuli wide interests	Heightened self-awareness, accompanied by feelings of being different	Highly energetic—needs little sleep or down time
Intellectual curiosity	Intuitiveness	Easily wounded, need for emotional support	Constantly questions
Power of critical thinking, skepticism, self-criticism	Flexibility	Need for consistency between abstract values and personal actions	Insatiable curiosity
Persistent, goal-directed behavior	Independence in attitude and social behavior	Advanced levels of moral judgment	Impulsive, eager and spirited
Independence in work and study	Self-acceptance and unconcern for social norms	Idealism and sense of justice	Perseverance—strong determination in areas of importance
Diversity of interests and abilities	Radicalism		High levels of frustration—particularly when having difficulty meeting standards of performance (either imposed by self or others)
	Aesthetic and moral commitment to self-selected work		Volatile temper, especially related to perceptions of failure
			Non-stop talking/chattering

Source: Clark, B. (2008). *Growing upgifted* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.



### \*A High Achiever

Remembers the answers.

Is interested.

Is attentive.

Generates advanced ideas

Answer the questions in detail.

Performs at the top of the

Responds with interest and opinions.

Learns with ease.

Needs 6 to 8 repetitions to master.

Comprehends at a high level.

Enjoys the company of age peers.

Understands complex, abstract humor.

Grasps the meaning.

Completes assignments on time.

Is receptive.

Is accurate and complete.

Enjoys school often.

Absorbs information.  
Is a technician with expertise in a field.

Memorizes well.

Is highly alert and observant.

Is pleased with own learning.

### A Gifted Learner

Poses unforeseen questions.

Is curious.

Is selectively mentally engaged.

Generates complex, abstract ideas.

Ponders with depth and multiple perspectives.

Is beyond the group.

Exhibits feelings and opinions from multiple perspectives.

Already knows.

Needs 1 to 3 repetitions to master.

Comprehends in-depth, complex ideas.

Prefers the company of intellectual peers.

Creates complex, abstract humor.

Infers and connects concepts.

Initiates projects and extensions of assignments.

Is intense.

Is original and continually developing.

Enjoys self-directed learning.

Manipulates information.  
Is an expert who abstracts beyond the field.

Guesses and infers well.

Anticipates and relates

Is self-critical.

### A Creative Thinker

See exceptions.

Wonders.

Daydreams; may seem off task.

Overflows with ideas, many of which will never be developed.

Injects new possibilities.

Is in own group.  
group.

Shares bizarre, sometimes conflicting opinions.

Questions: What if...

Questions the need for mastery.

Overflows with ideas—many of which will never be developed.

Prefers the company of creative peers but often works alone.

Relishes wild, off-the-wall humor.

Makes mental leaps: Aha!

Initiates more projects that will ever be completed.

Is independent and unconventional.

Is original and continually developing.

Enjoys creating.

Improvises.  
Is an inventor and idea generator.

Creates and brainstorms well.

Is intuitive.

Is never finished with possibilities.

Gets A's.

May not be motivated by grades.

May not be motivated by grades.

Is able.

Is intellectual.

Is idiosyncratic.

\*Developed by Dr. Bertie Kingore

## Difference Between a Bright Child and a Gifted Child

People usually term extremely bright children as a god gifted child. But, there are some differences between bright and gifted children that are described below respectively. One knows the answer while the other asks more questions. Source: Janice Szabos, Challenge Magazine

1. One is interested while the other is very curious.
  2. One pays attention while the other gets fully involved.
  3. One has good ideas while the other has unusual ones.
  4. One works really hard while the other scores better with minimal work.
  5. One answers the questions while the other further asks questions to the answer.
  6. One tops the class while the other is in a separate class of themselves.
  7. One listens attentively while the other portrays strong opinions.
  8. One learns easily while the other is already aware of it.
  9. One masters it in 6-8 repetitions while the other gets it in a couple of those.
  10. One understands ideas well while the other creates abstract theories.
  11. One enjoys with friends while the other seeks out adults and older children.
  12. One understands the meaning while the other creates a theory.
  13. One completes assignments while the other starts new projects.
  14. One is good at copying while the other is good at creating.
  15. One absorbs information while the other applies knowledge.
  16. One is a technician while the other is an inventor.
  17. One enjoys clarity while the other enjoys complexity.
  18. One memorizes well while the other guesses well.
  19. One is pleased with his performance while the other still wants to keep doing better.
- Gifted children are rare and having one of them is bound to make your life a roller coaster ride. Give them the time and support they need and allow them to blossom on their own accord. A star needs to shine by itself and it will.



## The Nature and Needs of the Gifted Child

Gifted students may have different developmental patterns than their peers in the areas of physical, cognitive, social, and emotional areas. The physical and social domains may develop at a similar or slower pace than others, while the cognitive and emotional domains may develop faster.



Some common characteristics of gifted learners are:

- Learn faster with less repetition and practice
- Understand and make abstractions earlier; may ignore details
- Have specific interests
- Are curious and tend to ask complex questions; like to know "why?" and "how?" things happen
- Are quick to realize relationships, including cause-effect
- Are bored with routine tasks
- Have large vocabularies and express themselves well
- Evaluate facts, arguments, and people critically
- Are creative, inventive, and original
- Try to find answers to questions in unusual ways
- Have highly-developed sense of humor





## Tips for Teachers: Successful Strategies for Teaching Gifted Learners

### GIFTED EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

This article by the Davidson Institute for Talent Development offers a list of tips for teachers. It focuses on suggestions any teacher can use in the classroom to aid their gifted students and promote their achievement in positive ways. Common blunders are also discussed as well as why they can be detrimental to the gifted student.

Publisher: Davidson Institute for Talent Development

Being a regular classroom teacher can be both an exciting and overwhelming experience. There are so many curriculums to cover, so many standards to meet, and so many things to learn. It can seem as though you're being stretched in an infinite number of directions. And, the most challenging part generally isn't the teaching; it is managing student behavior. Without a doubt the most difficult student in your

classroom is generally the one who finishes every assignment in less than five minutes and requires constant redirection. We hope you will find these tips helpful.

### **Tip #1: Familiarize Yourself with the Characteristics of Intellectually Gifted Students**

Not all gifted students in your classroom will be identified and even those who are may not always appear to be gifted. As such, it is important that you don't allow yourself to be distracted by false stereotypes. Gifted students come from all ethnic groups, they are both boys and girls, they live in both rural and urban areas and they aren't always straight-A students. Students who are intellectually gifted demonstrate many characteristics, including: a precocious ability to think abstractly, an extreme need for constant mental stimulation; an ability to learn and process complex information very rapidly; and a need to explore subjects in depth. Students who demonstrate these characteristics learn differently. Thus, they have unique academic needs. Imagine what your behavior and presentation would be like if, as a high school junior, you were told by the school district that you had to go back to third grade. Or, from a more historical perspective, what if you were Mozart and you were told you had to take beginning music classes because of your age. This is often the experience of the gifted child. Some choose to be successful given the constructs of public school and others choose to rebel. Either way, a few simple changes to their academic

experience can dramatically improve the quality of their lives — and, mostly likely, yours!

### **Tip #2: Let Go of “Normal”**

In order to be an effective teacher, whether it's your first year or your 30th, the best thing you can do for yourself is to let go of the idea of “normal.” Offer all students the opportunity to grow from where they are, not from where your teacher training courses say they should be. You will not harm a student by offering him/her opportunities to complete work that is more advanced. Research consistently shows that curriculum based on development and ability is far more effective than curriculum based on age. And, research indicates that giftedness occurs along a continuum. As a teacher, you will likely encounter students who are moderately gifted, highly gifted and, perhaps if you're lucky, even a few who are profoundly gifted. Strategies that work for one group of gifted students won't necessarily work for all gifted students. Don't be afraid to think outside the box. You're in the business of helping students to develop their abilities. Just as athletes are good at athletics, gifted students are good at thinking. We would never dream of holding back a promising athlete, so don't be afraid to encourage your “thinketes” by providing them with opportunities to soar.

### **Tip #3: Conduct Informal Assessments**

Meeting the needs of gifted students does not need to be an all consuming task. One

of the easiest ways to better understand how to provide challenging material is to conduct informal whole class assessments on a regular basis. For example, before beginning any unit, administer the end of the unit test. Students who score above 80 percent should not be forced to “relearn” information they already know. Rather, these students should be given parallel opportunities that are challenging. Consider offering these students the option to complete an independent project on the topic or to substitute another experience that would meet the objectives of the assignment, i.e. taking a college/distance course.

With areas of the curriculum that are sequential, such as mathematics and spelling, how about giving the end of the year test during the first week of school. If you have students who can demonstrate competency at 80 percent or higher, you will save them an entire year of frustration and boredom if you can determine exactly what their ability level is and then offer them curriculum that allows them to move forward. Formal assessments can be extremely helpful, however, they are expensive and there is generally a back log of students waiting to be tested. Conducting informal assessments is a useful and inexpensive tool that will offer a lot of information.

#### **Tip #4: Re-Familiarize Yourself with Piaget & Bloom**

There are many developmental theorists and it is likely that you encountered many of them during your teacher preparation course work. When it comes to teaching gifted children, take a few moments to review the work of Jean Piaget and Benjamin Bloom.

Jean Piaget offers a helpful description of developmental stages as they relate to learning. Gifted students are often in his “formal operations” stage when their peers are still in his “pre-operational” or “concrete operations” stages. When a child is developmentally advanced he/she has different learning abilities and needs. This is where Bloom’s Taxonomy can be a particularly useful. Students in the “formal operations” developmental stage need learning experiences at the upper end of Bloom’s Taxonomy. Essentially all assignments should offer the student the opportunity to utilize higher level thinking skills like analysis, synthesis and evaluation, as defined by Bloom. Search the Internet to learn more about these two important theorists. A couple of websites that may be of interest include:

[Piaget’s Stage Theory of Development](#)

[Bloom’s Taxonomy](#)

### **Tip #5: Involve Parents as Resource Locators**

Parents of gifted children are often active advocates for their children. If you are not prepared for this, it can be a bit unnerving. The good news is that, at least in my experience, what they want most is to be heard and to encounter someone who is willing to think differently. Offer to collaborate with them, rather than resist them, to work together to see that their child’s needs are met. For example, if they want their child to have more challenging experiences in math, enlist their help in finding better curriculum options. An informal assessment can help them determine the best place to

start and then encourage them to explore other options that could be adapted to the classroom. Most parents understand that teachers don't have the luxury of creating a customized curriculum for every student, but most teachers are willing to make accommodations if parents can do the necessary research. Flexibility and a willingness to think differently can create win-win situations.

**Tip #6: Learn About Distance Learning Opportunities**

The choices available to teachers and parents in this area have exploded in the past several years. Distance learning opportunities have dramatically increased options for meeting the needs of gifted students. Programs such as Art of Problem Solving math and the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth Online courses, as well as a myriad of online high school and college courses including online AP classes, are a great way to substitute more challenging curriculum for students who demonstrate proficiency with grade level material. Of course, these classes generally aren't free, but they are an option that many parents are willing to pay for. Search the free online [Davidson Gifted Database](#) to find resources recommended by students, parents and teachers.

**Tip #7: Explore Acceleration ~ It's Free and It Works!**

Another option is to allow students to attend classes with other students who are at the same developmental level, rather than with their age peers. If a 9-year-old can demonstrate that he is ready to learn algebra, why should he be forced to take fourth-grade math just because he is 9? Same goes for language arts, or science, or social

studies or any other area of the curriculum. Many well-meaning teachers worry that a student will run out of things to learn if they are given access to curriculum designated for older students. However, can a person ever truly run out of things to learn? Indeed, if Susie, a third grader, is allowed to learn fifth grade math this year, then fifth grade math isn't going to be appropriate for Susie when she gets to fifth grade. So, during fifth grade, Susie should have access to seventh grade (or higher!) math — depending upon her needs. What's wrong with that? Susie is learning at a rate appropriate to her abilities and will continue to do so whether or not we “make” her do third grade worksheets. Why not accommodate her unique learning needs with a bit of flexibility. Susie may just be the one who discovers the cure for cancer or comes up with an alternative fuel source that is more planet-friendly. A student should not have their opportunities limited because of their age, their race or any other factor that is beyond their control. Education should be about creating true learning opportunities for ALL students — including gifted students. If you have a student who is ready for fifth grade work, collaborate with the fifth-grade teacher(s). There are great tools, such as the Iowa Acceleration Scale, that can help determine whether the student should be moved ahead for just a subject or two, or should be grade accelerated.

Another reason that many teachers are afraid to try acceleration is that they are concerned about the student's level of social maturity. Research has demonstrated time and time again that acceleration is effective for many reasons and that social

maturity is rarely an issue. Several studies have shown that social age is correlated with mental age — not chronological age. So, not only is it generally in the student's best interest academically to accelerate, it is in his/her best social interest as well! The same goes for students in high school. If a student is ready for college work, encourage them to take college courses or to consider an early college entrance program. Indeed, the student might need a bit of tutoring to get up to speed and/or may need some extra support initially, particularly with writing and/or organization, however, gifted students learn very quickly and my experience has been that these supports can generally be removed after a reasonable adjustment period.

### **Tip #8: Learning from the Experiences of Others**

Many well-meaning teachers innocently commit the following blunders when they encounter gifted students. Don't feel bad if you have committed them.

Blunder Number One: Asking Your Gifted Students To Serve As Tutors For Students Who Are Struggling. Gifted children think and learn differently than other students. Asking them to serve as tutors can be a frustrating experience for all parties involved. This should also be remembered when putting together learning teams or group projects. Putting your strongest student with your students who are struggling is likely to be a painful experience for everyone. Imagine developing a cycling team with someone like Lance Armstrong as one member and then selecting other members who have either just learned to ride their bikes or are still relying on training wheels to help



them gain their balance. It is unlikely that anyone in this group is going to have a positive experience.

**Blunder Number Two: Giving Your Gifted Students More Work When They Finish Early.** It is common practice to give students more work if they complete their assignments early. This is counterintuitive if you consider that if the student is completing his/her work in an efficient manner, it is likely that the work is too easy. Let's once again consider our cyclist. Would you have the cyclist who finished the race first continue to ride, on a stationary bike no less, until all of the other cyclists finished the race? What if that cyclist was given an opportunity to participate in more challenging races or had the opportunity to develop his/her talents in related areas — wouldn't that be a better use of his/her time?

**Blunder Number Three: Only Allowing Gifted Students To Move Ahead When They Complete The Grade/Age Designed Work Assignments With 100% Accuracy.** It is important to remember that gifted students think and learn differently and can be extremely rebellious. No one — not adults, not children and especially not gifted children — likes to be bored! Gifted students, thanks to their ability to reason, will purposely choose not to do something merely because they "must" do it, particularly if it seems pointless to them. They would rather spend their time thinking or reading than completing worksheets that are too easy. Focus on your students' strengths, not their shortcomings. Offer them opportunities that are consistent with their abilities — lead

them from where they are. Depending how long they have been in the system, it may take them a while to trust you. So, don't be surprised if there isn't a miraculous overnight change. Be consistent and positive and remember, you may be the first teacher who has offered them an opportunity to actually learn, rather than regurgitate and they may not know how to handle your responsiveness. Don't fall in to the trap of saying, "See, I told you he wasn't gifted, I gave him one tough assignment and he failed." Gifted students generally haven't had to work to succeed. Give them time to build their, often atrophied, wings in a safe environment.

### **Tip #9: Utilize Outside Resources**

There is a lot of information in this article, and it is likely you're feeling a bit overwhelmed! Here is the best news so far . . . you are not alone and you don't have to come up with all of the answers by yourself. There are several national organizations devoted entirely to assisting gifted young people and the professionals who serve them. The three most notable organizations are the National Association for Gifted Children, [University of Iowa's Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education](#) and the [Davidson Institute for Talent Development](#). As a first step, join the Davidson Institute's free [Educator's Guild](#). Members have access to electronic mailing lists and a Facebook discussion group to exchange ideas, locate resources and discuss issues with other educators all over the country. The Davidson Institute also provides participants of the [Davidson Young Scholars program](#) and their parents, free services

as well. In addition to these national organizations, you may also wish to find organizations at the state and local level that focus on meeting the needs of gifted students. It isn't necessary to turn your world upside down to be an effective teacher of gifted students, you just have to be flexible, knowledgeable, and be willing to try new things. Gifted students cannot fend for themselves and it is up to you to begin the exciting adventure of making a difference to the gifted students in your classroom (if you haven't already done so)! After all, one person can and does make a difference.

### **Permission Statement**

This article is provided as a service of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to supporting profoundly gifted young people 18 and under. To learn more about the Davidson Institute's programs, please visit [www.DavidsonGifted.org](http://www.DavidsonGifted.org).



- Assume that all gifted students are the same and that one strategy works for all.
- Assume that by making gifted students tutors, you're providing a learning extension.
- Confuse extension activities with additional work. Gifted students need deeper and more complex assignments.
- Refer to alternate work for gifted students as "free time." Call it "choice time" or "unfinished work time," so students understand that they are required to tackle a task during this time period.
- Give too many directions to students about how they should complete a task. Say, "here's the end result I'm grading. How you get there is your choice."
- Assume that gifted students are growing academically. Rely on formative and summative assessments.



# Five Ways to Support Gifted Students in Your Classroom



Do you struggle to support the needs of gifted children in your classroom? Teachers often find it difficult to understand the specific needs of gifted students, which means they often don't get the support they need in the classroom. Find out how you can better support the gifted students in your classroom below!

## 1. Learn how gifted students think.

If you want to support gifted students in your classroom, it's important that you make an effort to learn how they think and learn about the different struggles they face. Understanding that gifted students have special needs, requirements, and trends in behavior will help you meet their needs and better support them in the classroom.

## 2. Created tiered assignments for students.

Tiered assignments can help you meet the needs of all students. Choose the basic standard objective and design an assignment on that standard to make the middle tier. Once the middle tier is finished, you make the other tiers by adding support for at-risk children and adding challenge for gifted students. Here are two simple ways you can add challenge to assignments:

- Give gifted students more complex numbers in a math assignment or a more difficult text to read.

- Add a second component to assignments, such as having them apply the skill they've learned to a real-world situation or asking them to write an explanation of their thinking.

### **3. Include a variety of levels in your classroom library.**

Make sure your classroom library has a variety of texts to support the reading ability and interests of gifted students. You can also encourage students to bring reading materials from home, but make sure the materials they bring challenge them to learn new words and increase their reading skills.

### **4. Utilize their talents and interests.**

Gifted students are often asked to do busy work when they finish assignments ahead of others. Instead of taking that approach, try utilizing gifted students' talents and interests to further explore a skill. For example, students could write or draw something related to the assignment/skill or they could act out solutions to the problem or project.

### **5. Explore real-world application.**

Gifted students understand math algorithms, science concepts, and grammar rules very quickly. You can encourage them to move beyond the skill they're learning by applying it in the real world. For example, they can explore how area and perimeter affect an architect's design or how scientists use animal classification to understand animal life and how it functions.

Create a differentiation strategy for your classroom with the educational materials and resources available in our [Elementary](#) section.

## **Additional Resources**

[Challenging Gifted Students in the Classroom](#)

[Surprising Tools to Prepare Future Innovators.](#)

[The Importance of Sensory-Based Classrooms](#)

[Improving Your Instructional Strategy for Elementary Math](#)



# What it Means to Teach Gifted Learners Well

*By Carol Ann Tomlinson, Ed.D, The University of Virginia*

Some people suggest that gifted education is just sort of "fluffy" or enriching-gravy on the potatoes, perhaps, but not anything especially substantial or critical in the way of mental fare. Others propose that all gifted education is what's good for all students. Unfortunately, those two criticisms sometimes stem from observing classrooms where gifted learners are taught inappropriately.

So what does it mean to teach a highly able student well? Of course it will vary some with the age of the child, the subject, the learning style of the student-and possibly even the child's gender or culture. Certainly appropriate instruction for such learners varies for a child who comes to school rich with experiences vs. a child who is equally able but lacks richness of experience. And it will vary with a child who has immense potential vs. a peer with somewhat less capacity. Nonetheless, there are general indicators of appropriate curriculum and instruction for highly able students (in their areas of strength)-and general indicators of inappropriate curriculum and instruction for such learners.

## Good Instruction for Gifted Learners

1. Good curriculum and instruction for gifted learners begins with good curriculum and instruction. It's difficult, if not impossible, to develop the talent of a highly able student with insipid curriculum and instruction. Like all students, gifted learners need learning experiences that are rich. That is, they need learning experiences that are organized by key concepts and principles of a discipline rather than by facts. They need content that is relevant to their lives, activities that cause them to process important ideas at a high level, and products that cause them to grapple with meaningful problems and pose defensible solutions. They need classrooms that are respectful to them, provide both structure and choice, and help them achieve more than they thought they could. These are needs shared by all learners, not just those who are gifted. But good instruction for gifted learners must begin there.
2. Good teaching for gifted learners is paced in response to the student's individual needs. Often, highly able students learn more quickly than others their age. As a result, they typically need a more rapid instructional pace than do many of their peers. Educators sometimes call that "acceleration," which makes the pace sound risky. For many gifted learners, however, it's the comfortable pace-like walking "quickly" suits someone with very long legs. It's only "fast" for someone with shorter legs. On the other hand, it's often the case that advanced learners need a slower pace of instruction than many other students their age, so they can achieve a depth or breadth of understanding needed to satisfy a big appetite for knowing.
3. Good teaching for gifted learners happens at a higher "degree of difficulty" than for many students their age. In the Olympics, the most accomplished divers perform dives that have a higher "degree of difficulty" than those performed by divers whose talents are not as advanced. A greater degree of difficulty calls on more skills-more refined skills-applied at a higher plane of sophistication. A high "degree of difficulty" for gifted learners in their talent areas implies that their content, processes and products should be more complex, more abstract, more open-ended, more multifaceted than would be appropriate for many peers. They should work with fuzzier problems, will often need less teacher-imposed structure, and (in comparison to the norm) should have to make greater leaps of insight and transfer than would be appropriate for many their age. Gifted learners may also (but not always) be able to function with a greater degree of independence than their peers.
4. Good teaching for gifted learners requires an understanding of "supported risk." Highly able learners often make very good grades with relative ease for a long time in school. They see themselves (and often rightly so) as expected to make "As," get right answers, and lead the way. In other words, they succeed without "normal" encounters with failure. Then, when a teacher presents a high-challenge task, the student feels threatened. Not only has he or she



likely not learned to study hard, take risks and strive, but the student's image is threatened as well. A good teacher of gifted students understands that dynamic, and thus invites, cajoles and insists on risk-but in a way that supports success. When a good gymnastics coach asks a talented young gymnast to learn a risky new move, the coach ensures that the young person has the requisite skills, then practices the move in harness for a time. Then the coach "spots" for the young athlete. Effective teachers of gifted learners do likewise.

## Inappropriate Instruction for Gifted Learners

1. Instruction for gifted learners is inappropriate when it asks them to do things they already know how to do, and then to wait for others to learn how. Many advanced learners regularly complete assignments calling on materials, ideas and skills they have already mastered. Then they wait for peers to catch up, rather than being pre-assessed and assigned more advanced materials, ideas and skills when they demonstrate competency.
2. Instruction for gifted learners is inappropriate when it asks them to do "more of the same stuff faster." Reading more books that are too easy and doing more math problems that have ceased being a challenge are killers of motivation and interest.
3. Instruction for gifted learners is inappropriate when it cuts them loose from peers and the teacher for long periods of time. Asking a highly able student to sit at a desk in the back of the room and move through the math book alone ignores a child's need for affiliation, and overlooks the fact that a teacher should be a crucial factor in all children's learning. It also violates the importance of meaningful peer interaction in the learning process, as well as in the process of social and emotional development.
4. Instruction for gifted learners is inappropriate when it is structured around "filling time." Highly able students are often asked to go write a play, complete a puzzle, or do classroom chores because they have completed required tasks that take others longer. It would be difficult to defend such practices as a high-quality use of educational time.
5. Instruction for gifted learners is inappropriate when they spend substantial time in the role of tutor or "junior teacher." All students need to be colleagues for one another, giving a hand or clarifying procedures when needed. That's quite different from when advanced learners spend chunks of time on a regular basis teaching what they already know to students who are having difficulty. Some educators suggest that doesn't harm highly able learners because their test scores remain high. That begs the question of the extended learning these students might have garnered had the same amount of time been spent in pursuit of well-planned new ideas and skills.
6. Instruction for gifted learners is inappropriate when it is rooted in novel, "enriching" or piecemeal learning experiences. If a child were a very talented pianist, we would question the quality of her music teacher if the child regularly made toy pianos, read stories about peculiar happenings in the music world, and did word-search puzzles on the names of musicians. Rather, we would expect the student to work directly with the theory and performance of music in a variety of forms and at consistently escalating levels of complexity. We would expect the young pianist to be learning how a musician thinks and works, and to be developing a clear sense of her own movement toward expert-level performance in piano. Completing word-search puzzles, building musical instruments and reading about oddities in the lives of composers may be novel, may be "enriching,"(and certainly seems lacking in coherent scope and sequence, and therefore sounds piecemeal). But those things will not foster high-level talent development in music. The same hold true for math, history, science, and so on.

## It's Actually Simple—In Theory

What it takes to teach gifted learners well is actually a little common sense. It begins with the premise that each child should come to school to stretch and grow daily. It includes the expectation that the measure of progress and growth is competition with oneself rather than competition against others. It resides in the notion that educators understand key concepts, principles and skills of subject domains, and present those in ways that cause highly able students to wonder and grasp, and extend their reach. And it envisions schooling as an escalator on which students continually progress, rather than a series of stairs, with landings on which advanced learners consistently wait.

It's not so hard to articulate. It's fiendishly difficult to achieve in schools where standardization is the norm, and where teachers are supported in being recipe followers, rather than flexible and reflective artisans. In schools where responsive instruction is a carefully supported indicator of professional growth, the capacity to extend even the most capable mind is a benchmark of success.

*This article reprinted from the May 1997 issue of Instructional Leader, with permission from the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors*



# 9 Challenges Facing Gifted Children (and How You Can Help!)

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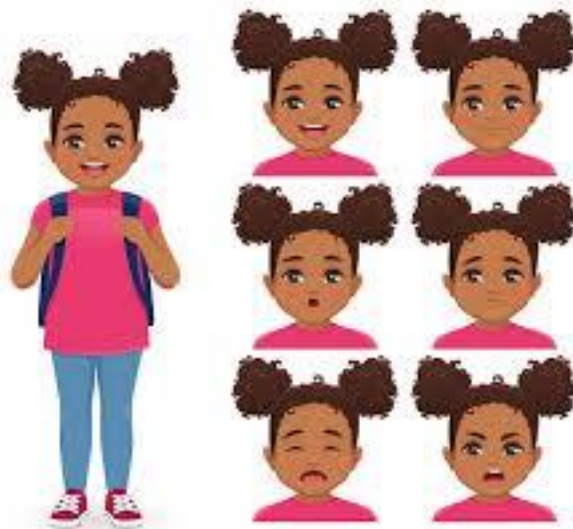
Google "Challenges Facing Gifted Children" for more information and tips.

(familyeducation.com/school/coping-giftedness/9-challenges-facing-gifted-children-how-you-can-help)

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1. Self-Esteem Issues
2. Guilt
3. Perfectionism
4. Control Issues
5. Unrealistic Expectations
6. Impatience
7. Friendship Issues
8. Attention and Organization Issues
9. Burnout

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## Twice-Exceptional and Easily Overlooked



Some organizations estimate that there are hundreds of thousands of twice-exceptional learners in U.S. schools. But there are no hard numbers because so many of these students are never formally identified as being gifted, having a disability or both.

Twice-exceptional children tend to fall into one of three categories. These categories help explain why students often go through school without the services and stimulation they need:

- **Students whose giftedness masks their learning and thinking differences.** These kids score high on tests for giftedness but may not do well in gifted programs. These students use their exceptional abilities to try to compensate for their weaknesses. But as they get older, they may be labeled as “underachievers” or “lazy” as they fall behind their gifted peers.
- **Students whose learning and thinking differences mask their giftedness.** Learning and thinking differences can affect performance on IQ tests and other assessments for giftedness. For example, since many of these tests require language skills, kids with language-based challenges may not perform well. These kids may be placed in special education classes, where they become bored and possibly act out because they aren’t being challenged enough. Some of these children are identified, wrongly, as having emotional problems.
- **Students whose learning and thinking differences and giftedness mask each other.** These kids may appear to have average ability because their strengths and weaknesses “cancel each other out.” Consequently, these students may not qualify for gifted programs or for special education programs.

## Identifying Twice-Exceptional Students

[Federal law](#) protects students with disabilities. School districts are required to look for children with disabilities and provide special education to those who qualify for it. Gifted education is a different animal.

There is no federal requirement for gifted education. Decisions about gifted programming are made at the state and local level. Few states specify what these services should be and which talents should be nurtured. This is often left up to individual school districts. And funding for gifted services can vary greatly from district to district. Identifying twice-exceptional students tends to be a low priority. Often it takes a proactive parent to push for testing for both giftedness and learning and thinking differences. But sometimes teachers are the first to raise the possibility.



Here are some early tip-offs that your child could be a twice-exceptional learner:

- Extraordinary talent in a particular area, such as math, drawing, verbal communication or music
- A significant gap between your child's performance in school and his performance on aptitude tests
- [Signs of a processing disorder](#), such as having trouble following spoken directions or stories that are read aloud

There isn't a simple, one-test way of identifying twice-exceptional children. [Ask your child's school](#) how it evaluates kids for giftedness and learning and thinking differences. The process will likely include assessing your child's strengths and weaknesses as well as observing him in class and other settings.

It may be helpful for you and the teachers to keep records of what your child excels in and struggles with. Be on the lookout for "disconnects" between how hard he's studying and what kinds of grades he's making.

## Social and Emotional Challenges

Giftedness can add to the social and emotional challenges that often come along with learning and thinking differences. Here are some challenges that twice-exceptional learners may face:

**Frustration:** This is especially common among kids whose talents and learning differences have gone unnoticed or only partially addressed. These students may have high aspirations and resent the often-low expectations that others have for them. They may crave independence and struggle to accept that they need support for their learning and thinking differences.

Like many gifted students, twice-exceptional learners may be striving for perfection. Nearly all the students who participated in one study of giftedness and learning disabilities reported that they “could not make their brain, body or both do what they wanted to do.” No wonder these kids are frustrated!

**Low self-esteem:** Without the right supports, children with learning and thinking differences may lose confidence in their abilities or stop trying because they start to believe that failure is inevitable. This kind of negative thinking can add to the [risk of depression](#).

**Social isolation:** Twice-exceptional kids often feel like they don't fit into one world or another. They may not have the social skills to be comfortable with the students in their gifted classes. They may also have trouble relating to students in their remedial classes. This can lead twice-exceptional learners to wonder, “Where do I belong?” These children often find it easier to relate to adults than to kids their age.



## How to Help Your Child

With the right supports and encouragement, twice-exceptional learners can flourish. (Just ask Steven Spielberg!) Here's what you can do to help your child:

**Talk to the school.** If you suspect your child may be twice exceptional, request a meeting with the school's special education coordinator. Discuss your concerns, and ask about [types of tests](#).

**Ask to stay in the gifted program.** If your child has been identified as gifted but is not doing well in that program, request that he be assessed for learning and thinking differences before any decisions are made about removing him from the program.

Make the most of your child's IEP. If the school determines that your child is twice exceptional, use the [annual goals in his Individualized Education Program](#) (IEP) to address his weaknesses *and* nurture his gifts. Be prepared to brainstorm—and to be persistent!

**Find other twice-exceptional kids.** Encourage your child to spend time with children who have similar interests and abilities. This can help him celebrate his strengths and feel less isolated. You may be able to connect with twice-exceptional families through [Understood's parent community](#).

**Empower your child.** Help him understand what his gifts and weaknesses are. Reassure him that he can get support in the areas where he struggles. But resist the urge to rush in and rescue him every time he gets frustrated. It's better to help him learn to cope with his mixed abilities.

By [partnering with your child's teachers](#), you can help your child develop his talents and achieve his full potential. Learn more about [how to be an effective advocate](#) for your child at school. With your love and support, your child can move ahead and make the most of his gifts.

### Key Takeaways

- Gifted children with undiagnosed learning and thinking differences may appear to be “underachievers” or “lazy.”
- Twice-exceptional children are often at risk for social and emotional challenges.
- Your child's IEP can address his weaknesses and nurture his strengths.





## How Can Parents and Teachers Help Gifted Children?

Parenting a gifted child is no less than a challenge. Not only does it come with the usual difficulties of a child, but it also has the extra responsibility of protecting and caring for the gift they come with.

1. Allow them the space to do their own things in situations with no specific outcomes.
2. Give them opportunities to take risks and let them fail in non-threatening ways.
3. Find other gifted children and try to make them a part of the community
4. Request your child's teacher to spend some time specifically with your child to cater to his needs.
5. Give them activities that teach them the necessity to balance urgent work and one requiring deep thought.
6. Introduce them to a questioning process that is structured to bring into action their higher-order thinking.
7. Let them take the initiative and solve problems while giving them minimal instructions.
8. Provide them with opportunities that help them develop their skills in the direction of their choosing.
9. Encourage them to use alternative techniques that stray away from the norm.
10. Provide them work that challenges their creativity and imagination.
11. Give them projects that have clear instructions as well as ones that don't have any.
12. Have an internal understanding that social maturity isn't connected to intellectual prowess.
13. Make them experience a variety of teaching and learning techniques.
14. Try to reduce repetitive work and replace with acts that help in enriching what they know.
15. Allow them to understand the differentiation amongst various activities and strategies.
16. Give them time and opportunity to figure out things for themselves.
17. Support them in times of need and give them the emotional guidance that kids generally require.



## Websites



[www.magcgifted.org](http://www.magcgifted.org)

[www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)

[www.hoagiesgifted.org](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org)

[www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)

[www.usm.edu/gifted](http://www.usm.edu/gifted)

[www.sparkchess.com](http://www.sparkchess.com)

[www.prufrock.com](http://www.prufrock.com)

[www.giftedbooks.com](http://www.giftedbooks.com)

[www.chess.com](http://www.chess.com)

[www.chesskid.com](http://www.chesskid.com)

## Books

We have a library of books on gifted at the central office. They are available for check. Please call (662) 423-3206, and ask for the gifted Contact Person, or contact a teacher of the gifted in the District. Examples include:

*The Gifted Kids Survival Guide—For Ages 10 and Under* by Judy Galbraith

*The Gifted Kids Survival Guide—A Teen Handbook* by J. Galbraith & Jim Delisle

*When Gifted Kids Don't Have all the Answers* by J. Galbraith & Jim Delisle

*On the Social and Emotional Lives of Gifted Children* by Tracy L. Cross

*Once Upon a Mind* by Jim Delisle

*Doing Pooly on Purpose: Strategies to Reverse Underachievement and Repect Student Dignity* by Jim Delisle

*Making Differentiation a Habit* by Diane Heacox, Ed.D.

*Growing Good Kids* by Deb Delisle and Jim Delisle



## Programs of Interest

### Gifted Development Center:

[www.gifteddevelopment.com](http://www.gifteddevelopment.com)

Since 1979, The Gifted Development Center has served as a resource center for developmentally advanced children and their parents and for gifted individuals of all ages. We provide in-depth assessment, counseling, consulting services and innovative materials.

### Duke Talent Identification Program:

[www.tip.duke.edu](http://www.tip.duke.edu)

The Duke University Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP) identifies gifted children and provides resources to nurture the development o these exceptionally bright youngsters. Through Duke TIP a whole range of activities and programs are accessible to parents and teachers to meet the individual needs of gifted children.

### Davidson Institute:

[www.davidsongifted.org](http://www.davidsongifted.org)

A private foundation that offers free services to profoundly intelligent young people, their parents, and the professionals who serve them.



### The Mississippi School of Arts:

[www.msabrookhaven.org](http://www.msabrookhaven.org)

This is a residential school located in Brookhaven, MS that provides advanced programs of

study in music, theatre, visual arts, dance, literary arts, and media arts for artistically gifted eleventh and twelfth grade student from districts across the state. Curriculum at MSA focuses on the arts and humanities.

**The Mississippi School for Math and Science:**

[www.themsms.org](http://www.themsms.org)

This residential school is located on the Mississippi University for Women in Columbus. It is designed for students in the eleventh and twelfth grades from across Mississippi. It is a co-educational high school that emphasizes mathematics and science.



### Other Recommended Books

*Teaching Gifted Kids in Today's Classroom*  
By Susan Winebrenner

*Guiding the Gifted child: A Practical Source for Parents and Teachers*  
By James T. Webb, Elizabeth A. Meckstroth, and Stephanie S. Tolan

*The Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Children: What Do We Know?*

National Association for Gifted Children by  
Maureen Neihart, Sally M. Reis, Nancy M.  
Robinson, and Sidney M. Moon

*Why Bright Kids Get Poor Grades and What  
You Can Do about It: A Six-Step Program  
for Parents and Teachers*

By Dr. Sylvia Rimm

## Resources

- Prufrock Press Books
- Free Spirit Publishing
- Davidson Institute for Talent Development
- Hoagies' Gifted Education Page
- National Association for Gifted Children  
(NAGC)
- Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)
- Dr. Jim Delisle
- Dr. Bertie Kingore
- Dr. Diane Heacox
- Dr. Barbara Clark
- Dr. Sylvia Rimm
- Dr. Joseph Renzulli
- Dr. Frances Karnes
- Judy Galbraith, M.A.
- Dr. Carol Tomlinson



## ACCESS FOR ALL GUIDE 2.0

The [Access for All Guide](#) was developed by the MDE in collaboration with educators across the state to help teachers address issues that impact learners with a wide variety of needs. This is the second edition of the Mississippi Department of Education's Access for All Guide, published in partnership with the Mississippi State University Research and Curriculum Unit, thus 2.0. This edition provides teachers with a library of curricular, instruction, environmental, and virtual adaptations to make learning accessible to every K-12 student. The guide is for all learners, including early childhood and gifted. To locate the guide, type the following link in the search box of your computer: [issuu.com/rcumedia/docs/afa\\_2.0](https://issuu.com/rcumedia/docs/afa_2.0)

What is Access for All? This guide provides all districts with instructional implementation **strategies** and **supports** for struggling learners. There are six areas: Academic, Physical, Speech/Language, Social Emotional, Behavioral, and Organization. Gifted students can have difficulties in any of these areas and be struggling learners.

