

Common Traits/Descriptors of Young Gifted Children

Collected by Members of Cherry Creek Early Entrance Advisory Committee, December 2008

Includes but is not limited to the following descriptors:

Cognitive Precocity

- Keen observation and intense and insatiable curiosity, sometimes driven to explore the world and his/her surroundings
- Unusual retention of information
- An extreme need for constant mental stimulation
- Periods of intense concentration particularly in areas of personal interest
- May become specialists at a young age demonstrating a need to explore subjects in surprising depth
- Task commitment beyond same-age peers
- Ability to learn and process complex information rapidly
- Interested in the difference between reality and fantasy and may explore both
- Ability to perceive relationships
- Unusual capacity for abstract reasoning, often before child is emotionally ready to deal with this cognitive understanding
- Strong mathematical skills
- Endless questions and inquiries
- Desire to learn for learning's sake, often developing their own methods of learning
- Unusually advanced sense of humor
- Astonishing visual memory and passion for detail, particularly with artwork
- Often perfectionist feeling he/she must live up to high standards
- A need for precision in thinking and expression - often answering questions with "that depends"

Speech Development

- Instances of linguistic precocity
- Use of advanced vocabulary, the more sophisticated, the less understood by other children
- Use of verbal ability for communication instead of actions
- Demonstrates remarkable fluency and complexity in speech
- Early and fluent command of language giving rise to love of word-play
- With delayed speech, speech development may arrive in the form of phrases or short sentences, rather than words in isolation
- Delayed speech should NOT be taken as an indicator that the child is not gifted
- May develop TWO vocabularies: one for home, one for school
- Usually displays rapid progression through stages of speech development
- Very early speech enables them to express ideas, seek information and interact verbally with parents and family members at an age when other children are only beginning to experiment with oral communication
- Early speech contributes significantly to the child's capacity to acquire and process information

Mobility

- May arrive early and progress with unusual speed (ex. mean age for walking independently at 12.1 months)
- Early mobility allows highly gifted child to move around independently and explore for themselves several months earlier than their age peers of average ability
- Early movement contributes significantly to the child's capacity to acquire and process information
- Extremely active in a goal-oriented manner, not to be confused as the hyperactive child
- May enjoy sophisticated activities not common with their age peers, such as playing chess

Reading

- Early reading skills
- Learned to read either with no assistance or with minimal assistance from parents
- Early reading gives the child access to an information bank not usually accessible to children until several years after school entry

Social/Emotional Awareness of Difference

- Early awareness of differences from age peers
- May hide advanced abilities or outstanding behaviors in educational settings to fit in socially with age peers
- Skill with which many gifted young children learn to adapt to and mirror the behaviors of the group in which they are placed
- Prefer older friends
- Show mature patterns of communication
- Exhibit high levels of social skills and social and moral reasoning
- Sensitive to any kind of image making or behavior that is a cover up
- Tendencies of perfectionism may make child anxious and reluctant to try something new
- Often more dependent on adults because of limited ability and manual dexterity to display complex ideas in project form
- May have problem awareness and may sometimes act particularly infantile
- May need help to understand the structure of the world through rules and regulations for his/her own inner security
- Need to feel he/she is understood, since often there is an awareness of differences and child may suffer from this feeling
- May have a great fear of death because of the child's awareness of its inevitability
- Demonstrate extreme sensitivity in multiple domains

Creative Precocity

- Early demonstration of talent in the arts
- Astonishing visual memory and passion for detail, particularly with artwork
- May demonstrate advanced natural abilities in the performing arts at very young age

Other Indicators

- Rapid, often asynchronous development, i.e., varied, uneven physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth, levels do not function in balance with each other
- May not make a quick commitment to something before they understand what it is all about, how it will work and what it will entail
- An inability to concentrate on a task that is not intellectually challenging, including repetitions, ideas or material presented in small pieces.
- An early interest in time

Resources

- Colangelo, N., Assouline, S.G., Gross, M.U.M. (2004 A Nation Deceived: How Schools hold back America's Brightest Students), Volume II
- Davidson Institute for Talent Development, <http://www.davidsongifted.org/>.
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- National Association for Gifted Children (Approved 11/06). Position paper: early childhood: creating contexts for individualized learning in early childhood education, <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=1696>.
- Robinson, N., & Weimer, L. (1991). Selection of candidates for early admission to kindergarten and first grade. From *The Academic Acceleration of Gifted Children*, Teachers College Press, pp. 29-50.
- Roeper, A. (1990). Identifying the young gifted child. *Parents' Press*, I 3, 22-23.
- Rogers, K. (2002) *Re-Forming Gifted Education: Matching the Program to the Child*. Great Potential Press, Inc., pp. 74-75
- Smutny, J. (2001) *Stand Up for Your Gifted Child: How to Make the Most of Kids' Strengths at School and at Home*. Free Spirit Publishing, pp. 61