

IS MY BRIGHT CHILD A GIFTED LEARNER?

“Talent is something rare and beautiful and precious, and it must not be allowed to go to waste.” – George Selden, said by Tucker Mouse in The Cricket in Times Square

☆Both parents and educators know that all children have special talents, but it can be difficult to determine whether a child is a bright, hardworking student who is being challenged effectively within his/her learning environment or a gifted child who would benefit from something beyond the level of their learning environment. The following table of characteristics is helpful in distinguishing between bright learners and gifted learners. It is important to remember that no child will demonstrate all of the traits listed below nor will they demonstrate them all of the time. This table is meant to give you an idea of what these two types of learners are like. (<http://207.228.215.62/BVG.htm>)

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

☆To give you a clearer picture of gifted learners, read through the following “myths” and “truths” about gifted learners from the website created by Hawaii’s gifted and talented program. (<http://www.k12.hi.us/~gtstate/default.htm>)

Common MYTHS About Gifted Students

- Gifted students are a homogeneous group, all high achievers.
- Gifted students do not need help. If they are really gifted, they can manage on their own.
- Gifted students have fewer problems than others because their intelligence and abilities somehow exempt them from the hassles of daily life.
- The future of a gifted student is assured: a world of opportunities lies before the student.
- Gifted students are goal-directed; they know where they are heading.
- The social and emotional development of the gifted student is at the same level as his or her intellectual development.
- Gifted students are nerds and social isolates.
- The primary value of the gifted student lies in his or her brainpower.
- The gifted student's family always prizes his or her abilities.
- Gifted students need to serve as examples to others and they should always assume extra responsibility.
- Gifted students make everyone else smarter.
- Gifted students can accomplish anything they put their minds to. All they have to do is apply themselves.
- Gifted students are naturally creative and do not need encouragement.
- Gifted children are easy to raise and a welcome addition to any classroom.

A Few TRUTHS About Gifted Students

- Gifted students are often perfectionists and idealistic. They may equate achievement and grades with self-esteem and self-worth, which sometimes leads to fear of failure and interferes with achievement.
- Gifted students may experience heightened sensitivity to their own expectations and those of others, resulting in guilt over achievements or grades perceived to be low.
- Gifted students are asynchronous. Their chronological age, social, physical, emotional, and intellectual development may all be at different levels. For example, a 5-year-old may be able to read and comprehend a third-grade book but may not be able to write legibly.
- Some gifted children are "mappers" (sequential learners), while others are "leapers" (spatial learners). Leapers may not know how they got a "right answer." Mappers may get lost in the steps leading to the right answer.
- Gifted students may be so far ahead of their chronological age mates that they know more than half the curriculum before the school year begins! Boredom can result in low achievement and grades.
- Gifted children are problem solvers. They benefit from working on open-ended, interdisciplinary problems; for example, how to solve a shortage of community resources.
- Gifted students often refuse to work for grades alone.
- Gifted students often think abstractly and with such complexity that they may need help with concrete study and test-taking skills. They may not be able to select one answer in a multiple choice question because they see how all the answers might be correct.
- Gifted students who do well in school may define success as getting an "A" and failure as any grade less than an "A." By early adolescence they may be unwilling to try anything where they are not certain of guaranteed success.

☆Keep in mind that there are many types of gifted learners out there as well. They may be academically gifted in all areas of learning or just one, they may be creatively gifted, gifted in visual spatial learning, gifted leaders, gifted in visual and performing arts or kinesthetically gifted. Hopefully, this information will be a springboard for you as you get to know your own child and their learning needs. The current EEC program is designed to service academically gifted children. However, we are looking ahead to a future program that would give more children access to the enrichment services provided by EEC. If you are interested in finding out more about gifted learners, please take a look at the websites below. And remember that your teachers are wonderful resources as well!
<http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/parentws.html> a comprehensive list of websites on gifted education
<http://www.ctd.northwestern.edu/resources/index.html> Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development