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Definitions* of Giftedness

“‘Gifted and talented children’ means children and, whenever applicable, youth, who are identified at the preschool, elementary, or secondary level as possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, specific academic, or leadership ability, or in the performing and visual arts, and who by reason thereof require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school.”

-U.S. Department of Education

“Giftedness consists of an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits – these clusters being above average general abilities, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity.”

-Joseph Renzulli, 1978

*The confusion is that there is much dissention among those in the field and in general education and no generally agreed upon definition exists.

Social and Emotional Characteristics of Gifted Children Which May Pose Challenges

- perceptiveness
- high involvement and preoccupation; need to understand
- heightened sensitivity
- perfectionism
- uneven integration of intellectual abilities
- emotional intensity
- feelings and early awareness of being different
- asynchronous development of physical, intellectual, social, emotional aspects
  - anxiety caused by advanced knowledge
  - early adolescence (some children, especially highly gifted, may skip the latency stage of development)
  - need for mental stimulation
  - excitability and overexcitability
  - need for precision
  - tendency toward introversion

**Emotional Concerns with Gifted Children**

*Asynchronous development* occurs when a child’s development in one or more of the following areas greatly exceeds development in the others: physical, intellectual, social, or emotional. Just because a child is highly intellectually developed does not mean that they will also be highly emotionally developed as well. **Suggestion:**

- Allow gifted children to work with many different peer groups.
- Sometimes they may work with intellectual peers.
- At other times they may be happy with their social peer group.

*Stress* can be a problem for gifted children. While a little stress is okay, too much can have negative effects on gifted kids. One such effect is a decrease in creativity. If the problem is not alleviated prior to 4th grade, it can have long term and harmful effects on children including: tension, extreme competitiveness, impatience, headaches, and depression. **Suggestions for battling stress:**

- Deep-breathing
- Reducing the amount of caffeine in their diet
- Exercise
- One-at-a-time-thinking
- “Space” for daydreaming

Providing space for daydreaming should be a part of the gifted child’s environment and routine. Do not always expect the child to think logically and creatively. Allow a private space, an ‘office’ or a ‘think tank,’ where your child can think and rejuvenate. Help them balance solidarity and interpersonal time.

*Perfectionism* can run rampant in gifted kids. Of course a healthy dose of perfectionism can allow people to get things done in a timely manner and reach expectations. On the other hand, unhealthy levels of perfectionism can
incapacitate gifted kids without the coping mechanisms to deal with them. *Suggestions for dealing with perfectionism:*

- Allow yourself to make several mistakes a day
- Participate in non-graded or judged activities
- Take risks
- Try something new
- Relish your accomplishments

*Adapted from Galbraith and Delisle, 1996*

Generally, the effects of perfectionism, if compounded over time can lead learners to believe that they must always perform at high levels. Such thinking can cause these students undue stress, just as it does in adults. Encourage children to take safe risks and to be cognizant of feeling perfectionistic. Give them coping strategies for dealing with these feelings and continue to recognize who they are, not just what they're able to do.

**Fun Activities for Gifted Kids and Parents**

*Bookmaking* – Create books on the following topics:

Weird Questions – The book would be written and illustrated with all of the weird questions you can think of

What Would Happen If? – Write an entire book on things that would happen if...

*Intention Game* –

Think of something that you would like to improve. How could you do it?

**Excellent Resources for Parents and Teachers of Gifted Students**

**Organizations**

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). ([www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)) This national organization compiles research findings in several journals and holds an annual conference for parents and educators of gifted students. This year’s conference is November 7–11 in Minneapolis, MN. Parent membership is $25 and includes a subscription to *Parenting for High Potential*.

North Carolina Association for the Gifted and Talented (NCAGT). ([www.ncagt.org](http://www.ncagt.org)). This statewide organization also disseminates information to teachers and parents of gifted children. There is an annual conference each spring. This year’s conference is March 19-21st in Winston-Salem. An annual parent membership is $25.
Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG). (www.sengifted.org) This organization provides information to teachers and parents in a yearly conference and regional support groups.

Books


Websites

Camp Broadstone at Appalachian State University (http://www.campbroadstone.com/). This is a camp for academically gifted youth in 4th through 9th grades.

National Association for Gifted Children Parent Site (www.nagc.org then click on the parent tab at the top of the page). This site has plenty of information for parents of gifted children including information specific to North Carolina residents.

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT). (www.gifted.uconn.edu) and (http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/nrcgt/nrconlin.html) Be sure to go to the second website listed and download the research monograph titled, “Considerations and Strategies for Parenting the Gifted Child.” This is an excellent free resource.