

TRAITS OF GIFTEDNESS

The following should not be viewed as a listing of traits that add up to a portrait of the gifted child. Giftedness lies not so much in the possession of a certain number of these traits as it does in the **degree and combinations** in which some of these traits may be present. For example, most children are curious; curiosity in itself does not mean giftedness. However, when a high degree of curiosity is present, in combination with resourcefulness, perseverance, and a drive to organize and perfect, it may take the form of an intense desire to probe until a solution has been found and may well be an indication of giftedness.

- 1. Heightened perceptual skills:**
Child is acutely aware of and responsive to his or her environment; uses all senses, is keenly observant and highly alert.
- 2. Intense curiosity:**
Child probes for answers - through verbal questioning, by exploring independently, and/or by manipulating objects.
- 3. Advanced problem-solving ability and conceptualization:**
Child thinks logically, draws conclusions, makes generalizations, transfers concepts to new settings, and makes good educated guesses.
- 4. Motivation and perseverance:**
Child has an unusual degree of commitment to tasks (especially self-selected activities), becomes absorbed in work, puts tremendous energy and time into specific topics of interest, tirelessly pursues interest to point of satisfaction. (These traits may be manifested in hobbies or collections.)
- 5. Drive to organize and perfect:**
Child sets what may be impossible high standards for self and for work, places great importance on quality of his/her performance.
- 6. Search for challenge:**
Child welcomes complexity (often selecting it over the simple), enjoys games of thought and reason (and resists being provided with the solution), plays with ideas and words.
- 7. Originality and humor:**
Child puts elements together in new ways; uses novel approaches to tasks and materials, often displays keen sense of humor, takes risks (often in the form of espousing unconventional or unpopular positions), and is both flexible and fluent in generating ideas.
- 8. Resourcefulness and independence:**
Child seeks own direction, is self-initiating, and has high tolerance for ambiguity.
- 9. Fondness for elaboration:**
Child loves to embellish by adding on to ideas, responses, and solutions; generates alternatives; is concerned with detail.
- 10. Acute sensitivity:**
Child reacts strongly to moral and social issues; feels joy, pain, injustice, sarcasm, and rejection keenly; has intense empathy. (These abilities may make a gifted child painfully conscious of his or her separateness from others and highly self-critical. However, at the same time, these very traits may contribute to the child's being well liked by peers and viewed by them as a leader. In other words, the social and emotional problems that may result from these traits may lie more in the student's self-image than in others' perceptions.)