

Gifted Traits Can Cause Classroom Problems

Gifted Children often exhibit characteristics that are different, in degree if not in kind, from those of their average age-mates. Frequently, the very traits that differentiate bright youngsters may get them into trouble in school. Following is a list of 15 characteristics of gifted and some problems that may arise in the classroom as a result.

Being aware of the potential problems is half the battle. Head off problems by being sensitive to the gifted child's nature, and by redirecting negative behaviors into more productive outlets.

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High verbal ability, unusually large vocabulary

The child seems older and more mature than he or she is, leading to unrealistic expectations on the part of the teacher; has difficulty developing listening skills; uses this verbal gift to manipulate or dominate others.

Early reading

The child presents problems primary teachers who may not know where to begin to meet the child's language arts development.

A questioning attitude

The child questions authority as well as rules, regulations, and generally accepted facts; teacher may feel threatened, which could result in hostile feelings towards child.

Keen powers of observation

The child sees through sham and pretense; teacher must be secure enough to admit he or she does not know something.

Long attention span, persistence, intense concentration

The child is unable to go on to a new activity; becomes oblivious to everything and everyone around, sometimes missing explanations, directions or assignments.

Ability to learn basic skills more quickly and easily, and retain much information with less repetition.

The child resists drill and repetition, becomes impatient with those who do not learn as quickly; devours material almost as fast as the teacher prepares it.

Wide range of interests

The child leaves activities incomplete.

Very narrow interests

The child sticks to things he or she knows or does best, unwilling to risk trying new things; signals perfectionistic tendencies.

Creativeness, originality, putting ideas and things together in novel ways

The child is seen as being nonconformist or rebellious, even "wierd".

Unusual, often highly developed sense of humor

The child sees humor in situations that escapes others; sometimes leads to judgements of inappropriateness by others.

Ability to see relationships, make connections

The child makes intuitive leaps which can exasperate teachers who insist on step-by-step procedures.

Sensitivity

The child is often overly sensitive, taking minor jokes or teasing too seriously; has feelings easily hurt.

High energy level

The child cannot sit or wait quietly; is impatient; seems to have inherent need to be constantly engaged in activity; becomes bored, sometimes disruptive; can exhaust teacher.

Independence

The child has difficulty working with others on group projects or activities requiring cooperative effort; usually prefers working alone, doing it his or her own way.

A "loner"

The child does not develop appropriate social skills, which leads to more isolation.

Based in part on work by May V Seagoe, cited in "The Identification of the Gifted and talented," R.A. Martinson, (Ventura County Superintendant of School, Ventura, CA, 1974).