



Kansas Effective Practices

Instructional Toolkit

Gifted 101 and Beyond
Social/Emotional Issues

Characteristics of Special Populations of Gifted Students

Special populations of gifted students include students with various disabilities. Willard-Holt (1999) provides specific characteristics of gifted students with various disabilities, which are provided below:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

- Poorly sustained attention spans
- Diminished persistence on tasks not having immediate consequences
- Often shift from one uncompleted activity to another
- Impulsivity, poor ability to delay gratification
- Unable to follow commands to regulate or inhibit behavior in social contexts
- More active, restless than other children
- Often talk excessively
- Often interrupt or intrude on others (e.g., butt into games)
- Difficulty adhering to rules and regulations
- Often lose things necessary for tasks or activities at home or school and may appear inattentive to details
- Highly sensitive to criticism
- Problem behaviors exist in all settings, but in some are more severe
- Variability in task performance and time used to accomplish tasks

Questions to Ask in Differentiating between Giftedness and ADHD

- Could the behaviors be responses to inappropriate placement, insufficient challenge, or lack of intellectual peers?
- Is the child able to concentrate when interested in the activity?
- Have any curricular modifications been made in an attempt to change inappropriate behaviors?
- Has the child been interviewed? What are his/her feelings about the behaviors?
- Does the child feel out of control? Do the parents perceive the child as being out of control?
- Do the behaviors occur at certain times of the day, during certain activities, with certain teachers or in certain environments?

Visual Impairments

- Fast rate of learning
- Superior memory
- Superior verbal communication skills and vocabulary
- Advanced problem-solving skills
- May progress more slowly than sighted students in some academic areas
- Ease in learning Braille
- Great persistence
- Motivation to know more
- Sometimes slower rate of cognitive development than sighted students
- Excellent ability to concentrate

Hearing Impairments

- Early reading ability
- Excellent memory
- Ability to function in the regular school setting with assistance despite impairment
- Rapid grasp of ideas
- High reasoning ability
- Wide range of interests
- Nontraditional ways of getting information
- Delays in concept attainment
- Self starters
- Good sense of humor
- Enjoy manipulating environment

- Intuition
- Ingenuity in solving problems
- Symbolic language abilities (different symbol system)

Learning Disabilities

- High abstract reasoning ability
- Good mathematical reasoning ability
- Keen visual memory, spatial skills
- Advanced vocabulary
- Sophisticated sense of humor
- Imaginative and creative
- Insightful
- Exceptional ability in geometry, science, arts, music
- Good problem-finding and -solving skills
- Difficulty with memorization, computation, phonics, and/or spelling
- Distractibility and/or disorganization
- Supersensitivity
- Perfectionism
- Grasp of metaphors, analogies, satire
- Comprehension of complex systems
- Unreasonable self expectations
- Often fail to complete assignments
- Difficulties with sequential tasks
- Wide variety of interests

Physical Disabilities

- Develop compensatory skills
- Creativity in finding alternate ways of communicating and accomplishing tasks
- Impressive store of knowledge
- Advanced academic skills
- Superior memory
- Exceptional problem-solving skills
- Rapid grasp of ideas
- Ability to set and strive for long-term goals
- Greater maturity than other children their age
- Good sense of humor
- Persistence, patience
- Motivation to achieve
- Curiosity, insight
- Self-criticism and perfectionism
- Cognitive development that may not be based on direct experience
- Possible difficulty with abstractions
- Possible limited achievement due to pace of work

Selective Achievers (also known as Underachievers)

- Poor attention span, daydreaming
- Low tolerance for persistence on tasks that seem irrelevant
- Begin many projects, see few to completion
- Development of judgment lags behind intellectual growth
- Intensity may lead to power struggles with authorities
- High activity level; may need less sleep
- Difficulty restraining desire to talk; may be disruptive
- Question rules, customs, and traditions
- Lose work, forget homework, are disorganized
- May appear careless
- Highly sensitive to criticism
- Do not exhibit problem behaviors in all situations

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