

Gifted Children Characteristics and Programmes To Enhance Their Potential

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Abstract

This Paper focus on Characteristics of Special gifted Children & strategies for enhancing their potential. Gifted children not only think differently to other children, they also feel differently. Their intellectual complexity combines with their emotional intensity to give them a qualitatively different way of experiencing the world. This unique perspective of life has a profound impact on their social relationships with age peers. In addition, personality characteristics such as idealism, expanded moral awareness and introversion set them further apart. For gifted children's social and emotional well being, it is imperative that these differences are understood as "normal for gifted" by teachers and parents and that they be helped to find true intellectual peers. In this way they will be able to express their unique selves in the world. Gifted child need special attention and care, both by the parents as well as by the teacher. Identifying their talents in a particular area and providing opportunities to develop skills is a big task for anyone. An analysis of the circumstances reveals that they may need a special school and specially designed activities if not special curriculum. A wise teacher can enhance the abilities of the gifted by assigning individual study projects, encouraging supplementary reading and writing, and fostering the development of creative hobbies and interests. This paper reflects Giftedness, Characteristics and Teaching strategies for the gifted children.

Key Words

Gifted Children, Personality, Characteristics. Strategies, Potential

Introduction

In every generation there are far too many children, whose great potential will become realized to the full, only if we identify them early enough and help them to overcome the hurdles. We often forget at times that the gifted children of today are the leaders of the tomorrow. We know that the gifted children are an asset of incalculable value to the society. Since they have high potentialities to excel in various areas of knowledge. For teachers, handling these children has become a burning problem, leaving aside identifying their talents. Parents often find it difficult to nurture the qualities and complain about their abnormal tendency. People who have special gifts or at least have the potential for gifted performance. Purposes of education as those children who demonstrate or manifest potential for high ability including high intelligence, high creativity, and high task commitment. The reason for using the multiple criterions is that all these characteristics – high ability, creativity, and task commitment seem to be very necessary for truly gifted performance in any field.

Definitions

Children with special gifts are very superior to a comparison group of other children of the same age. The gifted child is one who shows consistently remarkable performance in any worthwhile line of Endeavour.

According to **Russell and Dockery** – Giftedness is that precious endowment of potentially outstanding abilities which allows a person to interact with the environment with remarkably high levels of achievement and creativity.

According to **Witty** - The term gifted stands for those whose performance is consistently remarkable in some potentially valuable activity.

According to **Marland report** – The gifted are those who possess outstanding abilities or potential in the area of general intellectual capacity, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual or performing arts and psychomotor activity.

Characteristics of Gifted Children

There is no doubt that gifted children exhibit their talents by their remarkable performance in any task undertaken by them. Teachers can easily identify these children by keenly observing their performance. Recent researchers have thoroughly studied groups of gifted children and they outline the following as the common characteristics of gifted children.

Physical Characteristics

- Good in taller, weight, stronger, energetic, and well balanced speech
- Good in their physique and growth
- Good co-ordination and muscular control
- They have sharp sense organs

Mental Characteristics

- IQ between 110 and 120
- Better ability to organize, analyze, memorize, synthesize, reason out things
- Quick and clear self expression
- Good in abstract thinking and insight
- Good imagination power
- Rich in vocabulary
- Good common sense and good general knowledge
- Good in science and mathematics
- They have varied and wide interest

Social And Emotional Characteristics

- Better ability in adjustment
- Emotionally stable
- Better planning capacity
- They are more fond of questioning
- They may participate actively in discussion
- They are more humorous, careful, and generous
- They have friends of higher age of classes
- Sincere and dutiful
- High achievers in class

Negative Characteristics

- May be restless, inattentive, disturbing
- Lazy when the curriculum is unchallenging
- They may show egoistic and jealousy
- They are generally careless and poor in spelling and handwriting

Programs To Enhance Their Potential

Program designed for the benefit of the gifted students may have the following characters

1. A curriculum designed to accommodate the students advanced cognitive skills.
2. Instructional strategies consistent with the learning styles of gifted in the particular content areas, and
3. Administrative arrangements facilitating appropriate grouping of students for instruction.

Potentials can be providing for the following measures:

Enrichment

Acceleration

Grouping in special classes

Enrichment

Enrichment refers to provision of a differentiated programme of study for gifted students by the classroom teacher within the regular classroom, without assistance from an outside resource or consultant teacher. Additional experience is provided to the gifted students without placing them in a higher grade.

Curriculum Compacting: Modifying or “stream lining” the regular curriculum in order to eliminate repetition of previously mastered material, upgrade the challenge level of the regular curriculum, and provide time for appropriate enrichment or acceleration activities while ensuring mastery of basic skills.

General Exploratory Experiences: Experiences and activities that are designed to expose students to a wide variety of disciplines (fields of study), visual and performing arts, topics, issues, occupations, hobbies, persons, places, and events that are not ordinarily covered in the regular curriculum.

Group Training Activities: Instructional methods and materials that are purposefully designed to promote the development of thinking and feeling processes.

Individual And Small group Investigations of Real Problems: Investigative activities and artistic productions in which the learner assumes the role of a firsthand inquirer, the student thinking, feeling, and acting like a practicing professional.

Acceleration: Acceleration contributes to academic achievement. No negative effects on social or emotional development have been established. If it all any adjustment problems occur, they tend to be minor and temporary in nature. The gifted students acquire a more realistic self concept and learn tolerance for others of inferior abilities.

Grouping In Special Classes: Psychologists and educationist recognize the need for special classes and school for the education of gifted children. These classes are called elite classes.

- In a special class they are provided with enriched activities to

work according to their superior ability. Another pertinent fact is that special class provides for mutual stimulation, which induces the gifted to progress and develop more rapidly.

- The special class offer more challenging tasks to gifted children and enable the children to develop their potentialities to the maximum.
- Where there is no provision for special classes, the gifted children are given accelerated promotion.
- Special classes for gifted children also provide ample opportunities to develop leadership qualities in various arenas.
- These children are more sensitive, alert, and quick in their thinking.

Gifted students: Recommendations For Teachers

It is estimated that students who are gifted and highly talented encompass 5 to 15% of the school age population. These advances students can have increased capabilities in academics, creativity, music, dance, art, and/or leadership. The following are recommended:

1. Compact the curriculum and provide enrichment activities. Provide environments that are stimulating, and address cognitive, physical, emotional, and social needs of gifted children in the curriculum. Let the students move quickly through the required curriculum content and onto more advanced material. Allow for academic rigor.
2. Implement a multi-level and multi-dimensional curriculum. Differentiate the curriculum in order to address differences in the rate, depth, and pace of learning. This will enable all students in the class to learn about a specific area by creating projects at their own ability level. For example, if students are learning about the state of Delaware, students of different ability levels can be assigned to different types of tasks. At the conclusion of the class, all of the students can present what they have learned to the entire group.
3. Be flexible with the curriculum. Take advantage of real-life experiences that can be translated into problem-solving academics for all students. For example, an impending snowstorm can be used to instruct students. Students of different ability levels can be given different tasks, such as figuring out what snow is made of, predicting the amount of snowfall, or determining how many snow plows will be needed if 8 inches fall.
4. Make the curriculum student-centered. Engage gifted students in the curriculum decision-making process, giving them an opportunity to learn how to take responsibility for their own learning. Draw the curriculum from the students' interests and educational needs.
5. Allow students to pursue independent projects based on their own individual interests. Independent projects can be assigned on the basis of ability level. Encourage creativity and original thinking among gifted students. Allow them to explore ways of connecting unrelated issues in creative ways.
6. Allow gifted children to assume ownership of their own learning through curriculum acceleration. Instruct them to work ahead to problems of skills that they do not know. To help children learn the value of attaining knowledge in their lives, encourage learning for its own sake, rather than emphasizing the end results or accomplishments. Teach research skills

- for accessing information; higher level thinking skills for processing it; creative thinking and problem-solving skills for flexibility in approach and generation of information; and communication skills for sharing it.
7. Try to maximize your students' potential by expecting them to do their best. Encourage them to advance as quickly as they can. Assist in developing projects that allow them to achieve success one step at a time.
 8. Teach interactively. Have students work together, teach one another, and actively participate in their own and their classmates' education. Note: This does not advocate gifted children being peer tutors in the classroom; the gifted student should be challenged as well. Emphasis should be on working together in the classroom. Cluster gifted children together as a table within the regular classroom and utilize advanced materials, as well as other suggested resources and modification, to meet their exceptional needs.
 9. Explore many points of view about contemporary topics and allow opportunity to analyze and evaluate material. Allow open forums and debates in the classroom about controversial issues. As a teacher of gifted children, take an active stance. Be an advocate for gifted students. Utilize specialized training to ensure the ability to meet the needs of gifted students. Share personal interests with all students, to enrich and expand their world.
 10. Consider team teaching, collaboration, and consultation with other teachers. Use the knowledge, skills, and support of other educators or professionals in the schools.
 11. Provide opportunities for gifted children to interact with other gifted children across grade levels and schools through competitions or collaborative projects.
 12. Encourage gifted students to participate in extracurricular activities that involve academic skills. Examples include math and debate teams. Because gifted children are often natural leaders, it is important to invite them to use their talents and abilities in beneficial, rather than disruptive, manners. For example, encourage the gifted student to run for office in student council, or another extracurricular activity in which he/she is involved.
 13. Involve students in academic contests. Gifted students tend to be competitive by nature. Therefore, participating in regional and national competitions such as spelling bees, science fairs, and essay competitions will be fun challenges.
 14. Allow gifted children to create and publish a class newspaper to distribute. This consists of assisting students in understanding their special capabilities and the training necessary for them to reach their full potential.
 15. Set individual goals. Help guide students in creating their own goals and set goals that are specific, measurable, aggressive, realistic, and within a reasonable time frame. Be sure not to place expectations that are too high or too low.
 16. Consider parental input about the education of their gifted children.
 17. Always remember that gifted children are similar in many ways to the average child in the classroom. Do not place unrealistic expectations and pressures on gifted children.
 18. Address the counselling needs of each student to support emotional growth, as needed. Some gifted students have issues regarding anger, boredom, bullying, delinquency, isolation, depression, peer relations, perfectionism, dropping out of school, stress, frustration, and underachievement. About 20-25% of gifted students have emotional difficulties.
 19. Remember that gifted children may not excel in all areas. They may be ahead of other students in some areas and behind in some areas. Become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the children in your class.
 20. Do not assign extra work to gifted children who finish assignments early. This is unfair and frustrating to them. Simply offering more of the same only restricts further learning. Instead, allow those children to work on independent projects or other unfinished work when they finish an assignment early.
 21. If a child attends resource rooms, communicate with the specialist for suggestions on how to enrich daily class work. Avoid penalizing the child for special class attendance. Have another child in the regular classroom take notes and assignments for him/her.
 22. Provide plenty of opportunities for gifted children and average children to engage in social activities. Some gifted children may need help in developing social skills.
 23. Try to find the joy and uniqueness in each child. Children may exhibit their gifts on non-typical levels, rather than in general intellectual aptitude of specific academic abilities. Keep in mind that every child will have different needs.
 24. Organize resources in order to free yourself to work with individual children and give the children greater control of the learning situation. Supplementary books and learning tools, community resources, and the use of community members with specific skills as mentors can be helpful.
 25. Establish and maintain a warm, accepting classroom. Teach your classroom community to embrace diversity and honor differences. Provide an environment in which the child can demonstrate his or her potential or aptitude to learn and perform. Teachers should strive to establish a non competitive, individualized, and open classroom, which allows all students to advance at their own rate of learning.
 26. Remember that implementing some of these strategies will benefit all of the children in the classroom, not just the gifted ones

Conclusion

Children with special gifts are very superior to a comparison group of other children of the same age group. To teach gifted children effectively in general education classrooms, teacher can follow useful techniques such as curriculum compacting, providing enrichment learning center and promoting independent study.

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