

## What does *gifted* mean?

Take a look at how some of the experts, past and present, define it:

- ❖ Lewis Terman, the researcher known as the father of gifted education, defined gifted as “the top one percent level in general intelligence ability as measured by the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale or a comparable instrument.”
- ❖ Paul Witty, former professor at the University of Chicago believed a broader definition of gifted was needed to identify students with a high potential for creative expression: “There are children whose outstanding potentialities in art, writing, or in social leadership can be recognized largely by their performance. Hence, we have recommended that the definition of giftedness be expanded and that we consider any child gifted, whose performance in a potentially valuable line of human activity is consistently remarkable.”
- ❖ J.P. Guilford, theorist and author of *The Nature of human Intelligence*, gave the 1950 keynote address to the APA convention, which opened the door to identifying and nurturing creativity. He focused on the nature of intelligence, rather than on the level. He said that intelligence has three facets or dimensions: content, mental operations, and products. He considered people who possess a greater number of abilities in general or a greater number of abilities from a particular cluster to be gifted.
- ❖ Joseph Renzulli, director of the National Research Center of the Gifted and Talented, defined giftedness as “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.” He is critical of giftedness being defined by an IQ score.
- ❖ John C. Gowan placed gifted child movement within a humanistic psychology framework: “Gifted means having the potential to be verbally creative, while talented means having the potential to be nonverbally creative.”
- ❖ The Marland report, which led to federal funding for gifted education stated, “Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize areas of contribution to self and society.”
- ❖ Howard Gardner, a Harvard professor who developed a theory of multiple intelligences, defined 8 types (linguistic, musical, spatial, logical/mathematical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal).

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- ❖ The Columbus Group—a group of psychologists, educators, and parents led by clinical psychologist Linda Silverman—recognized the central role atypical development plays in the lives of gifted children: “Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modification in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to operate optimally.”
- ❖ Gagne, researcher at the University of Quebec, defined giftedness as having outstanding natural potential in at least one ability domain. He said that talent, or outstanding performance, is developed through systematic training and practice. One can be intellectually gifted yet not academically talented, according to Gagne, due to underachievement.
- ❖ The US Department of Education issues National Excellence: A Case for Developing America’s Talent in 1993, which defined gifted as follows: Children and youth with outstanding talent perform or show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience or environment. These children and youth exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools. Outstanding talents are present in children and youth from all cultural groups, across all economic strata and I all areas of human endeavor.”
- ❖ Writer and researcher Stephanie Tolan defined giftedness in terms of asynchronous development. She stressed that giftedness is an internal reality, mental processing that is outside of norms. Achievement, in contrast, is merely an expression of that mental processing. Achievement may fluctuate depending on a student’s immediate situation, but giftedness does not.
- ❖ Robert Sternberg, a professor at Yale University, argued that giftedness comprises five elements:
  - Excellence: the gifted are superior in some dimension or set of dimensions relative to their peers
  - Rarity: gifted people possess a high level of an attribute that is rare relative to their peers
  - Productivity: the dimension(s) in which a gifted individual shows excellence leads to productivity
  - Demonstrability: the dimension(s) that determine giftedness must be demonstrated through one or more valid assessments
  - Value: the society must value the superior performance in the demonstrated dimension(s)