Giftedness is asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are characteristically different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally. (The Columbus Group, 1991).

All children have unique strengths and talents and require opportunities to learn, grow, and be challenged to strive for excellence. However some children have intellectual skills and abilities that significantly differ in degree and dimension from their chronological age peers and, therefore, require the challenge of a differentiated curriculum both in depth and scope, in order to provide them with the opportunity to maximize their potential. With careful nurturing and appropriate education, gifted students have the capability to make a unique contribution to their communities and the world.

The Clifton Public School District recognizes the unique interests, needs, and talents of students with advanced abilities and is committed to special programming for these students to help them develop their extraordinary abilities. Our mission is to provide optimal development of the advanced students' intellectual, emotional, and social abilities and to honor the diversity among all students through a differentiated and challenging curriculum. The district offers a variety of gifted services for students from primary through high school level designed to offer students a continuing experience of support, challenge, and success. From early level curriculum differentiation to the elementary gifted and talented pull-out programs to the advanced placement classes offered in the high school, the wide range of gifted opportunities in district are many and varied.
Learning experiences for all students should be arranged so that whatever paths students travel, and whatever distances they travel on these paths, the experiences must be appropriate to their unique interests and learning styles.

_Schools are Places for Talent Development – (Renzulli, 1994)_

**Elementary gifted services include both inclusive and pull-out formats.**
All of the courses and special activities are designed to provide challenge and rigor for students at all levels to expand their learning and creativity in their particular area of interest. In addition to curriculum based programming, many Clifton Public School students take part in a variety of building enrichment and extra-curricular programs such as S.I.T.E. (Student Inventions Through Education), Symposium for the Arts, Math-a-thon, and numerous other academic clubs which encourage advanced learning and challenging activities. Numerous Clifton Public School students also participate in the district Integrated Summer Academic Enrichment Programs.

**When it comes to instruction and learning, one size does not fit all.**
Gifted children have different abilities, talents, and interests, making them a very diverse group of individuals. What they share in common are advanced abilities, but advanced in different ways. The district recognizes that a single profile for identifying students of high academic and intellectual ability does not address the variety and range of gifted students’ needs therefore, gifted education services are offered in a variety of ways. A continuum of services is provided to insure that each student is educated in what is determined to be the least restrictive environment appropriate for that individual student. Our task is not to be gatekeepers to exclude students but rather custodians of student growth by recognizing noticeable strengths and working to enhance them whether through gifted programming or another medium.

The **Continuum of Services** includes, but is not limited to:

- Academic and Creative Competitions
- Acceleration by Grade
- Acceleration by Subject
- Cluster Grouping
- Differentiated Curriculum & Instruction in the general education classroom
- Flexible Grouping
- Gifted and Talented Art Program
- Gifted and Talented Academic Pull-Out Program
- Integrated Academic Summer Enrichment Program

The Clifton Public School District believes that every child has the right to achieve at their highest potential, and is committed to recognizing the unique value, needs, and talent of each of our students. The purpose of the district’s gifted services is to provide optimal development of the advanced student’s intellectual, emotional, and social abilities and honor the diversity among all students through a differentiated and challenging curriculum.
The Clifton Public School District is committed to thoroughly following proper procedures to ensure that all students in need of gifted services are identified and appropriately served. Students who are gifted and/or talented may be found within any racial, ethnic, or socio-economic group; within any nationality; within both genders; and within populations with disabilities. Recognizing and identifying students who may need differentiated services is a multi-stepped process which consists of referral, screening, and assessment of eligibility.

**THE NEW JERSEY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE REGULATIONS (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1)**

Define gifted and talented students as: Those students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability, in one or more content areas, when compared to their chronological peers in the local district and who require modification of their educational program if they are to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

The regulations require that students be compared to their chronological peers in the local school district. Local school districts must use multiple measures to identify students. Multiple measures include but are not limited to, achievement test scores; grades; student performance or products; intelligence testing; parent, student, and/or teacher recommendation; and other appropriate measures.

The regulations require appropriate curricular and instructional modifications for gifted and talented students indicating content, process, products, and learning environment. Appropriate adaptations are required in order to assist all students to achieve the New Jersey core curriculum content standards.

**N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.1** states that district boards of education shall ensure that curriculum and instruction are designed and delivered in such a way that all students are able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the core curriculum content standards and shall ensure that appropriate instructional adaptations are designed and delivered for students with disabilities, for students with limited English proficiency, and for students who are gifted and talented. Students who are identified as twice-exceptional may have learning disabilities that mask their giftedness. These students may require different identification methods and program modifications to reach their full potential. It should not be assumed that students with disabilities cannot participate in gifted and talented programs. Meeting the needs of gifted students is not an extracurricular activity or club but a requirement for all New Jersey public schools.
K-2 ACADEMIC GIFTED SERVICES

Children enter school with wide variations in skills, abilities, interests, and experiential backgrounds that help foster readiness to learn. Children are not bound by age from possessing or displaying a variety of talents. At early ages, it is often very difficult to denote how much precocious behavior can be attributed to an enriched home environment versus actual intellectual ability. Identification of academically gifted students is far more reliable beyond the early grades. The first three primary years are critical for gifted children—as they are for all children—because at this time children are developing educational patterns and attitudes that last a lifetime and may affect later school performance.

Giftedness is more than developing skills faster or going through the developmental milestones earlier. Young gifted children are intensely curious, produce a constant stream of questions, learn quickly and remember easily, and think about the world differently than their age-mates. Their intense curiosity may get them into trouble, particularly when they try to figure out how something works. They may have a super-high energy level and yet be highly sensitive and perfectionistic. Young gifted children are at risk for boredom, frustration, and depression. Recognizing giftedness is important because to persist, giftedness needs nurturing.

K-2 Gifted Services: Identification Procedures

Our mission is to provide optimal development of the advanced students’ intellectual, emotional, and social abilities and honor the diversity among all students through a differentiated and challenging curriculum. Essential to this philosophy is identifying services that promote gifted behaviors rather than labeling children as having reached a state of “being gifted”. Although Clifton does not formally affix the label of “gifted” to children in grades K-2, the district does informally evaluate these young students as potentially gifted and believes it is our responsibility to provide a learning environment that will address each child’s current instructional needs.

Intellectually advanced students in the primary grades are informally identified and are enriched within the general education classroom through curriculum differentiation and along the Continuum of Services offered. K-2 classroom teachers differentiate instruction as students demonstrate a need for more depth and complexity. The aim is to remove the ceiling on what is learned and promote creativity and higher level cognitive skills.

Throughout the school year, classroom teachers collect evidence of the student’s advanced abilities through conversations with the parent(s), observations, anecdotal records, portfolios, and behavioral checklist(s). The process of identification is continuous. Classroom teachers regularly review student progress and performance and student data is gathered each year in a portfolio as reference for the following school year. To this end, classroom teachers work to develop and implement appropriate programming for more able learners.
At the end of second grade, formal identification procedures are conducted to determine eligibility for gifted services in the upper elementary grades. Participation in K-2 Academic Gifted Services is neither a pre-requisite for, nor a guarantee of eligibility for gifted services in grades 3-5.

**K-2 Gifted Services: Classroom Based Differentiated Instruction**

Learning opportunities for K-2 students with advanced learning needs consist of a continuum of differentiated curricular options, instructional approaches and resource materials. The classroom should provide an atmosphere of inquiry and discovery, with emphasis on problem solving, reflection and critical thinking, rather than mere coverage of the content. Students with high potential should be required to stretch themselves to succeed, with a blend of individualized and group activities.

The curriculum for identified K-2 students will be differentiated in the areas of content, process, and product. Differentiated Instructional Strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- Student centered classroom
- Cooperative environment
- Questioning techniques
- Critical, creative, evaluative, and interpersonal skills
- Learning Centers

**K-2 Gifted Services are Classroom Based and managed by the Classroom Teacher**

**There is no pull-out program for K-2 students.**
3-5 ACADEMIC GIFTED SERVICES

In order to identify giftedness beyond the precocious learner, formal identification procedures are conducted at the end of second grade to determine eligibility for gifted services in the upper elementary grades. The identification and placement of intellectually advanced students in grades 3-5 is based on individual student ability and need; the emphasis is on matching students with particular services that will afford them the opportunity to receive instruction on an appropriate level so that they will experience and demonstrate growth in academic areas.

Participation in 3-5 Academic Gifted Services is neither a pre-requisite for, nor a guarantee of eligibility for gifted services in grades 6-12.

3-5 GIFTED SERVICE OPTIONS

Special instructional services for gifted students are meant to nurture and develop innate abilities through appropriate learning opportunities. Appropriate options, such as curriculum compacting and a variety of extension activities, match individual student needs for differentiation. In addition, students identified with a strong or very strong need for differentiation may receive services in the form of advanced acceleration options or pull-out Academic TAG classes. The identification system is structured, yet flexible enough to allow for individual school program adaptations to meet unique student needs.

Gifted and Talented Services are centered on a three-tiered approach (Strands A, B, C) to afford flexibility to meet the varying needs, abilities and interests of students. The Levels of Service illustrate multiple ways in which we might recognize and nurture students’ strengths, talents, or sustained interests. Each level of service involves a unique and important way of differentiating instruction in relation to students’ strengths, talents, and interests.

As we acknowledge the importance of meeting the needs of high-ability students utilizing the Levels of Service approach allows us to extend that commitment by recognizing the significant potential which exists among many more students than have traditionally been identified and served in both academic content areas and many talent domains.
IDENTIFICATION: RENZULLI’S THREE-RING CONCEPTION OF GIFTEDNESS

The basic structure of gifted and talented programming is based on the extensive research and developments made by Dr. Joseph Renzulli, who pioneered programs specifically for children who are talented and gifted. His model is widely known among educators as the nation’s top program for educating the talented and gifted.

According to Dr. Renzulli, “Gifted behavior occurs when there is an interaction among three basic clusters of human traits: above-average general and/or specific abilities, high levels of task commitment (motivation) and high levels of creativity. Gifted and talented children are those who possess or are capable of developing this composite of traits and applying them to any potentially valuable area of human performance...gifted behaviors can be found 'in certain people (not all people), at certain times (not all the time) and under certain circumstances (not all circumstances)." Giftedness is fluid and does not occur in all areas at all times.

The development of ability or talent is a lifelong process.

It can be evident in young children as exceptional performance on tests and/or other measures of ability or as a rapid rate of learning, compared to other students of the same age, or in actual achievement in a domain. As individuals mature through childhood to adolescence, however, achievement and high levels of motivation in the domain become the primary characteristics of their giftedness. Various factors can either enhance or inhibit the development and expression of abilities.

A person's giftedness should not be confused with the means by which giftedness is observed or assessed.

Parent, teacher, or student recommendations, a high mark on an examination, or a high IQ score are not giftedness; they may be a signal that giftedness exists. Some of these indices of giftedness are more sensitive than others to differences in the person's environment. Research on creative-productive people has consistently shown that although no single criterion can be used to determine giftedness, persons who have achieved recognition because of their unique accomplishments and creative contributions possess a relatively well-defined set of three interlocking clusters of traits. These clusters consist of above average, though not necessarily superior, ability, task commitment, and creativity.

It is important to point out that no single cluster “makes giftedness.” Rather, it is the interaction among the three clusters that research has shown to be the necessary ingredient for creative-productive accomplishment. It is also important to point out that each cluster plays an important role in contributing to the display of gifted behaviors. This point is emphasized because one of the major errors that continues to be made in identification procedures is to overemphasize superior abilities at the expense of the other two clusters of traits.
A combination of
- high innate cognitive ability/academic strength,
- task commitment/intrinsic motivation,
- and creative/productive thinking ability

are ALL essential in the identification of students.

**Behavioral manifestations of giftedness according to Renzulli's “Three-ring” definition of gifted behaviors**

*Ability refers to the innate capacity that one has for learning*

**Above average ability (general)**
- high levels of abstract thought
- adaptability to novel situations
- rapid and accurate retrieval of information

**Above average ability (specific)**
- applications of general abilities to specific area of knowledge
- capacity to sort out relevant from irrelevant information
- capacity to acquire and use advanced knowledge and strategies while pursuing a problem

**Task commitment**
- capacity for high levels of interest, enthusiasm
- hard work and determination in a particular area
- self-confidence and drive to achieve
- ability to identify significant problems within an area of study
- setting high standards for one’s work

**Creativity**
- fluency, flexibility and originality of thought
- open to new experiences and ideas
- curious
- willing to take risks
- sensitive to aesthetic characteristics

*Source: Adapted from Renzulli & Reis, 1997, p. 9.*

The focus of identification is not to label a student, but to recognize and respond to the current educational needs of the student. As the concentration is on identifying current instructional needs, the critical decision to be made is not if a student is gifted and talented but whether a student’s present ability warrants special educational provisions and to what degree and dimension.

Our task is not to select students for all time but to select them for enhanced instructional opportunities that may benefit them at a given stage of development (now).
2015-2016 ACADEMIC GIFTED SERVICES GRADE 2 SCREENING PROCESS:

REFERRAL, IDENTIFICATION & PLACEMENT PHASES

“Thousands of geniuses live and die undiscovered—either by themselves or others.”
—Mark Twain

The Screening Process consists of creating a pool of potential students who may or may not proceed to the referral, evaluation, identification, and/or placement phases.

SCREENING PROCESS: 3 PHASES

1. Initial Referral Phase: Nomination
2. Evaluation Phase: Level 2 Identification
3. Selection and Placement Phase

1. Initial Referral Phase

The Screening Process consists of creating a pool of potential students who may or may not proceed to the referral, evaluation, identification, and/or placement phases. The Referral Phase is initiated by the student’s classroom teacher according to the Referral Guidelines.

- The Initial Referral Phase is a pre-assessment nomination stage that involves collecting student data from multiple sources to document possible need for gifted program services. The purpose of the referral is to submit existing information as evidence of a student’s potential. Please be reminded that referral does not guarantee further evaluation or gifted services. Students must qualify on a preponderance of the screening measures to move the Evaluation Phase. If the referral evidence does not support further evaluation, the process for those individuals, is subsequently discontinued.

GRADE 2 REFERRAL GUIDELINES:
All grade 2 students with the following
must be referred by the Grade 2 classroom teacher

| Advanced Reading level as evidenced by |
| AR: STAR Reading Grade Level Equivalent 3.5 or higher |
| --------------- AND/OR --------------- |
| Advanced Math level as evidenced by |
| Performance Matters Math Post-test score of 93% or higher |
2. Evaluation Phase: Level 2 Identification

During the Evaluation Phase, all data is gathered into a profile format so that each student’s strengths may surface. Qualified individuals are identified and invited to participate in Level 2 Identification in which further evaluation is necessary to narrow the field of students to those who have demonstrated gifts or talents. If the student referral data evidences that he or she may benefit from gifted services, parent/guardian consent will be obtained at this time for Level 2 SAGES-2 testing to be conducted.

Students whose data indicates a considerable possibility of high innate cognitive ability/academic strength, a high rate of acquisition and retention, task commitment/intrinsic motivation, and creative/productive thinking will be invited take the SAGES-2 Reasoning Subtest designed to measure aptitude, the innate ability to learn. The SAGES-2 Reasoning Subtest asks students to solve analogical problems by identifying relationships among pictures and figures. The questions asked are non-verbal involving pictures and figures (i.e. no words and no numbers) therefore minimizing cultural and/or educational biases.

3. Selection and Placement Phase

Students with strong intellectual aptitudes have strengths in the areas often associated with the ability to rapidly learn and apply academic knowledge. The advanced cognitive development of gifted children enables them to learn and understand more advanced and complex material than their non-gifted age mates. The goal of the identification process to find students, whose abilities, talents, and potential for accomplishment are so outstanding that they require special provisions in the form of an appropriately challenging curriculum program to meet their educational needs. Because the concentration is on identifying student needs (rather than students) the critical decision to be made is not if a student is gifted and talented but whether a student’s ability warrants special educational provisions and to what degree and dimension.

During the Selection and Placement Phase, each individual Profile of Student Strengths is reviewed and service recommendations are made. The Clifton Public School District provides three strands of differentiated gifted services to help students reach their full potential. The level of service depends on the educational needs and abilities of each individual student.

Upon completion of the Selection and Placement Phase, parents/guardians and elementary school principals are notified, in writing, via U.S. mail, of service recommendations for eligible students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THREE STRANDS OF DIFFERENTIATED GIFTED SERVICES GRADES 3-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strand A:</strong> the Matrix of Student Strengths suggests a pattern of moderate to high achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Recommendation: The student can be challenged with increased responsibility and access to enriched assignments within the general educational classroom. As a moderate or high achiever, the student’s capabilities can enable them to succeed in assignments that may daunt or overwhelm an average performer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strand B:</strong> the Matrix of Student Strengths suggests a pattern of specific or emerging academic strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Recommendation: The student is considered an appropriate candidate for differentiated services within the general educational classroom and shall have their needs accommodated by means of differentiated learning opportunities in their strength or interest area(s) within the regular classroom and along the Continuum of Services offered. Differentiated services within the general educational classroom provide varied opportunities for students with specific or emerging academic strengths to learn at an appropriate pace, with significant depth and breadth, in an inclusive learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strand C:</strong> the Matrix of Student Strengths suggests an advanced level pattern of high innate cognitive ability/academic strength, task commitment/intrinsic motivation, and creative/productive thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Recommendation: <em>In addition to differentiated services within the general education classroom, the student is considered an appropriate candidate for the pull-out Academic TAG Program.</em> Eligible students are those with an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability and potential, task commitment and creative-productive thinking, who require differentiated and challenging programs and/or services beyond the general school program to reach their full potential, both intellectually and emotionally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The differentiated services offered through the district are not one size fits all and the Gifted and Talented Committee may consider empirical evidence and/or exercise professional judgment and expertise in order to make educationally sound and appropriate decisions. As the screening process involves the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, no specific score on any one measure determines eligibility and the Gifted and Talented Committee therefore does not furnish individual eligibility reports.
The Identification Pyramid
Levels of Service Approach

**STRAND C:** Highly challenging and intensive services that provide sufficient rigor, while allowing individual creativity to fuel success, for students who demonstrate a consistent and unusually advanced degree and balance of innate intellectual ability or potential, task commitment/intrinsic motivation, and creative/ productive thinking ability or potential. Challenge with differentiated services within the general educational classroom as well as pull-out Academic TAG Program service option. Make available advanced opportunities that respond to the unique needs of individual students who have demonstrated outstanding ability, expertise, motivation and passion to learn. Both, within the regular classroom as well as pull-out Academic TAG Program, they need advanced opportunities designed around 21st Century skills in collaboration, innovation and perseverance, to pursue investigative projects in which they become “first-hand inquirers”. Differentiation examples (in addition to those previously mentioned) include but are not limited to: Grade level acceleration, independent study, problem based learning.

**STRAND B:** Services for students who demonstrate a pattern of specific or emerging academic strengths. Challenge with differentiated services within the general educational classroom. Make available alternative learning activities through which students can investigate their interests and verify areas in which they may demonstrate strengths and talent potentials. Offer these students opportunities to develop “how-to” skills: how to conduct research, problem solve, brainstorm and practice scientific methodology. Differentiation examples (in addition to those previously mentioned) include but are not limited to: Curriculum compacting, flexible grouping, tiered assignments, subject acceleration.

**STRAND A:** Services for students who demonstrate a pattern of moderate to high achievement. Challenge with increased responsibility and access to enriched assignments within the general educational classroom. Make available opportunities that provide foundational skills and tools to help students discover and build their personal strengths, talents, and motivation. Differentiation examples include but are not limited to: Individual learning styles, multiple intelligences, flexible grouping, learning centers, small group enrichment, interest groups.

A mind once stretched by new ideas never regains its original dimensions.
- Oliver Wendell Holmes

The Levels of Service Approach:
1. Is consistent with research on human abilities and styles.
2. Recognizes and celebrates present positives while promoting continuous improvement in gifted education programming.
3. Stimulates innovation to help us raise our vision of the future to new levels.
4. Reminds us where to keep “the compass” set: what’s important for students?
5. Is consistent with contemporary views of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
6. Supports appropriate and challenging instruction for high-ability students in many talent areas and academic disciplines.
7. Supports effective individualized and differentiated instructional practices for all students.
The Strand C pull-out Academic “TAG” Program is an option offered to formally identified students in third through fifth grade who demonstrate a consistent and unusually advanced degree and balance of intellectual ability or potential, task commitment, and creative/productive thinking ability or potential. These students are eligible to attend the “TAG” Program at School #5 one day a week, for the entire school day, in a pull-out setting designed to encompass the intellectual and social needs of the gifted student as well as the unique characteristics of being gifted. The pull-out academic TAG Program gives identified students the opportunity to interact with peers of similar ability, while remaining a part of the regular classroom setting.

Intelligence is fluid and multi-faceted and every child is quite remarkable in certain ways. All students benefit from enriching activities and educational experiences that recognize their strengths. Students selected for the Strand C pull-out Academic TAG Program are not selected as a reward for either good performance or model behavior but because their ability warrants special educational provisions to the degree and dimension that the Strand C Academic TAG Program provides. When a student is not identified for the pull-out Academic TAG Program, it does not mean that he/she does not have gifted and talented potential but rather that the student’s strengths can be accommodated within the regular school program without extraordinary measures of differentiation, at this time.

**The Appeal Process**

Special abilities can manifest at different times in the development of children. Intelligence is multifaceted, developmental, and dynamic and can either be inhibited or enhanced by experiences. Gifted identification is about diagnosing a student’s current need for differentiated educational programming. As students mature and go through school, often previously unknown or undeveloped gifts emerge and/or intensify. Therefore, the appeal process allows for the re-evaluation of a student for gifted services.

*As testing and evaluation is conducted only once a year, students who do not initially meet qualifying expectations may be re-evaluated for gifted services after one school year through the Gifted Services Appeal Process.*

All students receiving gifted service should receive services that will increase their ability to think critically and creatively. The convergence of the practical abilities, analytical abilities, and creativity will ensure the student’s ability to be successful. Each service option involves a unique and important way of differentiating instruction in relation to the student’s strengths, talents, and interests. The focus of all gifted services is to help students grow and fulfill their potential with the goal of finding ways to support and advance a student’s learning by providing appropriate daily challenges and experiences.
2015-2016 GIFTED SERVICES APPEAL/TRANSFER PROCESS
*As testing and evaluation is conducted only once a year, students who do not initially meet qualifying expectations may be re-evaluated for gifted services after one school year through the Gifted Services Appeal Process.

Special abilities can manifest at different times in the development of children. Intelligence is multifaceted, developmental, and dynamic and can either be inhibited or enhanced by experiences. Gifted identification is about diagnosing a student’s current need for differentiated educational programming.

As students mature and go through school, often previously unknown or undeveloped gifts emerge and/or intensify. When a parent/guardian feels that the initial gifted and talented screening process does not accurately reflect the capability of their child, the parent/guardian has the right to appeal the gifted and talented identification decision. The appeal process allows for the re-evaluation of a student for gifted services.

THE APPEAL PROCESS IS TIME SENSITIVE AND APPEALS ARE ONLY ACCEPTED FOR A LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME EACH FALL. PLEASE CHECK BACK IN THE FALL FOR SPECIFIC DATES.

*TRANSFER STUDENTS*
WITH APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION, ARE ACCEPTED FOR REVIEW AT ANY TIME OF YEAR.

The Gifted Services Appeal Process involves collecting student data from multiple sources to document possible need for gifted program services. The purpose of this process is to submit existing information for Gifted Services re-evaluation as evidence of a student’s potential. Please be reminded that the submission of an appeal does not guarantee gifted services. Students must qualify on a preponderance of the screening measures to qualify for Gifted Services placement.

APPEAL RESULTS:

The focus of identification is not to label a student, but to recognize and respond to the current educational needs of the student. As the concentration is on identifying current instructional needs, the critical decision to be made is not if a student is gifted and talented but whether a student’s present ability warrants special educational provisions and to what degree and dimension.

If an appeal student is determined eligible for gifted services, the level of service depends on the educational needs and abilities of the individual student as evidenced through the re-evaluation process. Therefore, a re-evaluation placement decision may be at any one of the three strands of differentiated gifted services and not necessarily Strand C.

After the deadline, the Gifted Services Committee will meet to consider the appeal and provide parents/guardians and principal notification, in writing, via U.S. mail, of service recommendations for eligible students. No results will be available before the deadline.
THE GIFTED SERVICES APPEAL PROCESS STEPS:

1. To initiate an appeal, the parent/guardian should contact their homeschool Principal in order to set in motion the appeal process.

2. The Principal will then supply the child’s classroom teacher with the appropriate Gifted Services Appeal/Transfer Student Referral Packet to complete, assemble, and submit.

3. The teacher will furnish the parent/guardian with a copy of the Parent/Guardian Inventory from the packet and when completed, the parent will return it to the teacher to be submitted with the balance of the appeal request.

4. The completed packet, signed by the principal (with appropriate documentation, supplied by the classroom teacher) is submitted to the Gifted Services Committee at School #5 no later than the date specified.

5. After the deadline, the Gifted Services Committee will meet to consider the appeal and provide parents/guardians and principal notification, in writing, via U.S. mail, of service recommendations for eligible students. No results will be available before the deadline.

TRANSFER Referrals/Students New to the District:

Students who are new to the district will be reviewed any time of year. When a student identified as gifted and talented by a previous school district transfers into the district, the student’s records shall be reviewed by the Gifted Services Committee to determine appropriate placement.

Please follow the appeal procedure to bring a transfer student to the attention of the Gifted Services Committee.
Clifton Public Schools Gifted Services Contact Information:

Mrs. Rachel Capizzi  
School #5 Principal • Gifted Services Coordinator  
School #5 • 136 Valley Road, Clifton NJ 07013  
Main Office: 973-470-2386  
Email: rcapizzi@clifftonschools.net

Mrs. Dawn J. Ward  
3-5 Academic TAG Program Teacher • K-5 Gifted Resource Teacher  
School #5 • 136 Valley Road, Clifton NJ 07013  
Main Office: 973-470-2386  
Email: dward@clifftonschools.net

As the K-5 Gifted Services Resource Teacher, I am available to provide consultation and collaborative services to teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Feel free to contact me for information and assistance in the areas of differentiated curriculum and instruction, advocacy for gifted students, and guidance regarding District Gifted Services.

As both a classroom teacher and a district wide resource teacher the most reliable way to contact me is through email: dward@clifftonschools.net

There are students whose intellectual capacity, rate of learning, and potential for creative contributions demand experiences apart from, but connected to, the regular classroom. We are committed to the belief that these intellectually advanced students require guidance in discovering, challenging, and realizing their potential. Under this philosophy it becomes the responsibility of the entire staff, in partnership with parents and the school system, to meet the needs of students with exceptional abilities.
Characteristics of Gifted and Talented Learners

Gifted students possess some common characteristics. Recognizing these general traits and understanding how they may reveal themselves is an important step toward working effectively with this unique group of children.
IS MY BRIGHT CHILD A GIFTED LEARNER?
—Talent is something rare and beautiful and precious, and it must not be allowed to go to waste.
—George Selden, said by Tucker Mouse in The Cricket in Times Square

Both parents and educators know that all children have special talents, but it can be difficult to determine whether a child is a bright, hardworking student who is being challenged effectively within his/her learning environment or a gifted child who would benefit from something beyond the level of their learning environment. Making all "A's" isn't always an indicator of giftedness- it indicates hard work and motivation and other factors but not necessarily what is recognized as "giftedness."

The following table of characteristics is helpful in distinguishing between bright learners and gifted learners. These descriptions may overlap and are not mutually exclusive. The bright learner may be more readily identifiable in the classroom setting and considered to be “gifted.” The gifted learner may well be underachieving and not readily recognized. It is important to remember that no child will demonstrate all of the traits listed below nor will they demonstrate them all of the time. This table is meant to give you an idea of what these two types of learners are like.

### Bright Learners
- Knows the answers
- Is interested
- Is attentive
- Has good ideas
- Works hard
- Answers the questions
- Top group
- Listens with interest
- Learns with ease
- 6-8 repetitions
- Understands ideas
- Enjoys peers
- Grasps the meaning
- Completes assignments
- Is receptive
- Copies accurately
- Enjoys school
- Absorbs information
- Technician
- Good memorizer
- Enjoys straightforward, sequential presentation
- Is alert
- Is pleased with own learning

### Gifted Learners
- Asks the questions
- Is highly curious
- Is mentally and physically involved
- Has wild, silly ideas
- Plays around, yet tests well
- Discusses in detail, elaborates
- Beyond the group
- Shows strong feelings and opinions
- Already knows
- 1-2 repetitions for mastery
- Constructs abstractions
- Prefers adults
- Draws inferences
- Initiates projects
- Is intense
- Creates a new design
- Enjoys learning
- Manipulates information
- Inventor
- Technician
- Good guesser
- Thrives on complexity
- Is keenly observant
- Is highly self-critical

by Janice Szabos
**Bright Learners**

Bright learners are students that have a strong motivation to perform well and succeed in school. These types of students usually enjoy school, get A’s, memorize information easily, give complete and accurate answers, have advanced knowledge and are at the top of their class. They tend to be satisfied with their knowledge and skills, but they will receive new information with willingness and interest when required. High achievers are usually emotionally and socially on track, and they relate well to peers of their own age.

**Gifted Learners**

Gifted learners are students that have a strong motivation to learn and expand their intellectual capacity. They prefer self-directed learning, may or may not be motivated by grades, are excellent at making inferences and connections, pose complex questions, generate abstract concepts and are beyond their class. They are not satisfied with a straightforward answer, preferring to examine a problem's intricacies and underlying implications. They tend to be self-critical and are constantly seeking to expand their knowledge. Gifted learners may be emotionally and socially behind, on track or advanced. Most tend to connect with peers on the basis of shared intellectual interest rather than similarity in age.

"All children, no matter what their academic abilities are, are important and are equally valuable simply by nature and by being human."

-- Dr. Bertie Kingore
Parents and teachers are a child’s most important allies and they need to keep each other informed and up to date. Each sees things from a different perspective and each has a particular insight into a child’s learning needs.

As a parent, you’re in a good position to truly understand your child’s unique gifts, interests, temperament, strengths, and limitations. The teacher, on the other hand, has had an opportunity to evaluate your child’s learning style, academic skills, and social and cognitive development in comparison to a large number of children of the same age. It doesn’t take long for most experienced teachers to develop an intuitive sense of their students’ strengths and needs—how quickly they learn, the type of instruction they respond to best and their attitudes toward school. The teacher may also be able to help you better understand the district’s gifted education services and how they are different than what your child is already receiving.

Together, you should be able to get a more complete, objective view than either of you had on your own. Stay focused on working together as a team to come up with ideas and solutions that will work for your child.
THE TRAITS, APPTITUDES, AND BEHAVIORS OF THE EXCEPTIONALLY ABLE CHILD

It is important to remember that no child will demonstrate all of the traits listed below nor will they demonstrate them all of the time.

**Motivation: Intrinsic desire to learn**
- Demonstrates persistence in pursuing and completing self-selected tasks (school or non-school activities).
- Expresses enthusiasm about learning.
- Aspires to be somebody or something.

**Interest: Intentness, passion, concern, or curiosity about something.**
- Demonstrates unusual or advanced interest in a topic or activity.
- Self-starts.
- Pursues an activity unceasingly.

**Communication: Highly expressive and effective in use of words, numbers and/or symbols.**
- Demonstrates unusual ability to communicate in one or more ways (verbally, physically, artistically, symbolically).
- Uses particularly apt examples, illustrations, or elaborations.

**Problem Solving Ability: Effective, inventive strategies used to recognize and solve problems.**
- Demonstrates unusual ability to devise or adapt as systematic strategy for solving problems.
- Changes strategies when the employed strategy is ineffective.
- Creates new designs or inventions.

**Memory: Retains and retrieves information.**
- Already knows something that is assumed to be new knowledge.
- Needs few repetitions for mastery.
- Has a wealth of information about school and/or non-school topics.
- Pays attention to details.
- Manipulates information.

**Inquiry: Questions, experiments, explores.**
- Asks unusual questions for age.
- Plays around with ideas.
- Demonstrates extensive exploratory behaviors directed at eliciting information.

**Insight: Grasps new concepts, makes connections, senses deeper meanings.**
- Demonstrates exceptional ability to draw inferences.
- Appears to be a good guesser.
- Is keenly observant.
- Sees unusual and diverse relationships.
- Integrates ideas and disciplines.

**Reasoning: Uses controlled, active, intentional, goal-oriented thought.**
- Makes generalizations.
- Uses metaphors and analogies.
- Thinks things through in a logical manner.
- Thinks critically.
Creativity: Produces many and/or highly original ideas.
- Shows exceptional ingenuity in using everyday materials.
- Has wild, perhaps silly ideas.
- Produces ideas fluently or flexibly.
- Is highly curious.

Humor: Brings heretofore unrelated ideas together in a recognizable relationship.
- Uses a keen sense of humor – may be gentle or hostile.
- Has a large accumulation of information about emotions.
- Sees unusual relationships.
- Demonstrates unusual emotional depth.
- Demonstrates sensory awareness

Intensity: Extreme responses to stimuli; emotional, intellectual, sensory, psychomotor, and/or imagination
- Intense passionate feelings
- Fears and anxieties
- Feelings of guilt
- Concerns with death
- Identification with others' feelings
- Heightened awareness of injustice and hypocrisy
- High level of emotional energy
- Heightened sensitivity to the environment; eg light, noise, movement
- High levels of empathy
- Keen self-awareness
- Vulnerability to social rejection

One misunderstanding regarding the quality identified as "giftedness" is the belief that an individual's innate ability is indestructible and is not influenced by the environment. Research and practice have shown this not to be true. "Giftedness" either progresses or regresses and can be stifled in an educational environment that does not enhance individual growth. Abilities develop when the environment challenges and stimulates the innate ability of the person. Such conditions must continue throughout the person's lifetime for high levels of self-actualization to occur. Feelings of frustration, boredom, and discouragement result when limits are placed upon an individual's intellectual and educational growth. The unique intellectual and academic needs of gifted students may not always be fully met through general-education. Once identified as a student with giftedness, special services may be required to meet these exceptional students' needs.
Personality Traits

Gifted people have a number of personality traits that set them apart, and that are not obviously connected to the traits of intelligence, IQ, or creativity that are most often used to define the category. Many of these traits have to do with their particularly intense feelings and emotions, others with their sometimes awkward social interactions. These traits make that these people are quite often misunderstood and underestimated by peers, by society, and usually even by themselves. As such, most of their gifts are actually underutilized, and they rarely fulfill their full creative potential.

The Interrelated Nature of Intellectual and Personality Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual:</th>
<th>Personality:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional reasoning ability</td>
<td>Insightfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual curiosity</td>
<td>Need to understand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rapid learning rate</td>
<td>Need for mental stimulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facility with abstraction</td>
<td>Perfectionism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex thought processes</td>
<td>Need for precision/logic</td>
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<td>Vivid imagination</td>
<td>Excellent sense of humor</td>
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<td>Early moral concern</td>
<td>Sensitivity/empathy</td>
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<td>Passion for learning</td>
<td>Intensity</td>
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<td>Powers of concentration</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
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<td>Analytical thinking</td>
<td>Acute self-awareness</td>
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<td>Divergent thinking/creativity</td>
<td>Nonconformity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keen sense of justice</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity for reflection</td>
<td>Tendency toward introversion</td>
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Gifted and High Achiever: What are the Differences?

- **Asynchronistic Development**: Developmental rates are generally even, but not so with gifted individuals.
- **Degree of Giftedness**: How far an individual is from the average IQ
- **Motivation**: Gifted individuals are intrinsically motivated.
- **Traits and Characteristics**: Gifted individuals experience life more intensely than others.
CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUNG GIFTED CHILDREN

It is important to remember that no child will demonstrate all of the traits listed below nor will they demonstrate them all of the time. Many of these characteristics also apply to older gifted children.

GENERAL INTELLECTUAL ABILITY
- good memory
- exceptional curiosity
- learn quickly and easily
- unexpected depth of knowledge in one or more areas
- increased metacognitive skill
- complexity in thought processes

MOTIVATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
- perfectionism
- persistence
- self-initiative

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
- intense feelings
- heightened sensitivity
- increased interest in religion, politics, race, environment, etc.
- concern for people, animals, issues, etc.
- strong sense of right and wrong
- heightened awareness of others’ feelings

LINGUISTIC APTITUDE
- advanced vocabulary
- use of more complex sentences
- make up elaborate stories and fantasies
- memorize many poems and stories

MATH/LOGIC/ANALYTIC APTITUDES
- interest in maps, globes, charts, calendars, clocks
- interest in abstract concepts such as time and space
- enjoy working with puzzles
- like to count, weigh, measure, or categorize objects
- understand concept of money
- unexpected understanding of mathematical operations

SCIENTIFIC APTITUDE
- desire to know how and why things work
- collect things
- advanced understanding of cause and effect
- like to take things apart
Advanced development
Developmentally, the young gifted child frequently reaches the 'milestones' such as walking and first speech earlier than average. They tend to have a more sophisticated vocabulary than their peers, may love to define words, usually love books and may be self-taught readers at preschool and kindergarten ages.

Early intellectual ability
Young gifted children often have a very good memory, and may be able and eager to learn simple math, science and social studies concepts. They may develop an all-consuming interest in one particular topic - e.g. dinosaurs - and have an awe-inspiring understanding and knowledge about the subject, or seem interested in almost everything, sometimes moving rapidly from one topic to the other.

A thirst for knowledge
Many gifted children have a real thirst for knowledge, like the true scientist or philosopher who wants to 'find out' about the world, just for the sake of it. Sometimes, there seems to be a strong drive to explore, learn about and master the environment. Often, contents of cupboards etc. need to be investigated, and toys and activities may be mastered at a rapid rate and discarded.

A very high level of activity
The young gifted child can be extremely active and frequently have a reduced need for sleep. Although still very exhausting for parents, unlike hyperactivity, it is activity with a purpose and a remarkably long concentration span may be shown when something is of particular interest.

Caution...
Due to their ability to see far more into what is for most a simple situation, and possibly due to their fear of failure, the young gifted child may hold back in a new situation, as if to check out all the implications. They may speak late, but then in complete sentences, possibly walk late, initially appear very shy in new social settings, and may require full details before offering help or answering questions.

Sensitivity
Some young gifted children can be very sensitive, general anger or criticism is taken personally; they suffer along with the starving children on TV, the injured animal, etc. and when overloaded with impressions, may become introverted and withdrawn.

Uneven development
Children may be gifted in a very narrow field, or may have "all round" high ability, but often there is a large discrepancy between their intellectual, physical and emotional development. Capable of abstract thought before being able to emotionally deal with these concepts, they may become overly concerned with death, the future, sex etc., Manual dexterity usually lags behind their intellectual expectations, resulting in frustration at the inability to complete envisaged tasks. Ten minutes after a near-adult conversation they may come whining about some small hurt, needing to be comforted like the five-year-old they really are!

The early ability to distinguish between reality and fantasy
This may lead to discussions on, and the acceptance of, the inevitability of death; the frequent need to analyze stories to see which parts "really could happen" and awkward questions about Santa and the tooth-fairy!
An early insight into social/moral issues
Some young gifted children have a well developed social conscience and may become very concerned about wars, pollution and other kinds of injustice and violence. They often see through adult hypocrisy and cover-up and may display fear and anger to discover that adults can be inconsistent and unreasonable.

Greater reasoning power and manipulation
Young gifted children tend to use their verbal ability rather than actions for communication. Generally, it is possible to reason with them from a very early age. At times, their verbal ability combined with their greater reasoning powers and understanding of human relationships, may be put to use arguing with and trying to outsmart parents and teachers, and their abilities may lead them to discover the advantages of dishonest behavior such as lying and stealing, at an early age. Although credit needs to be given for convincing, logical arguments, it is very important that normal discipline applies to the gifted child as it is a very insecure feeling for someone so young to realize they are able to manipulate adults.

Social skills
Most gifted children are also socially very able and get along well with others, frequently showing strong leadership abilities. However, even from an early age, they may see themselves as 'different'. Their more sophisticated vocabulary and advanced sense of humor is often not understood by other children and this may lead to feelings of inferiority and rejection. For this reason gifted children may associate more with older children and adults. It can be very important for some gifted children to find other gifted children with whom to communicate. Although it is important for them to have someone who truly understands them, this may be difficult to achieve.

Individuality
Many gifted children may be seen as "weird" or unconventional; they may have great fantasy and creativity and develop their own, unique style of learning. It is important that these children are not constantly participating in organized activities, but have a chance to do their "own thing"; a time for solitude, reflection, and creativity.

The importance of adults
Gifted children may not be interested in very structured activities or meeting other's standards, often preferring to develop their own projects. Despite this, adult guidance is very important - to help them determine in which situation it is necessary to conform and when it is O.K. to be "different", to put realistic limits on an often overambitious project, to lend a hand when manual dexterity doesn't meet mental visions and to avoid self-criticism becoming destructive. Help may be needed to set realistic standards.

Perfectionism
Often the gifted children set very high standards for themselves, getting frustrated and angry when they discover they may not have the manual dexterity to complete envisaged projects. Sometimes, knowing they are unable to complete the task to their own standards, they may refuse to do it at all.
Misconceptions and Realities of Gifted Children

Misconception: All children are gifted.
Many principals and teachers assert that all children are gifted, meaning that all children have some areas in which they have strengths or that all children have equal potential for learning.

Reality: While all children have relative strengths and weaknesses, some children have extreme strengths in one or more areas. Students who are gifted may require special education, just as students who have cognitive disabilities do. The belief that all children are gifted leads to a lack of identification and service to students who are gifted.

Misconception: Gifted kids have it made and will succeed in life no matter what. They can make it on their own because they’re smart. They don’t need any special help in school or anywhere else.

Reality: Gifted students may drop out of school because they don’t find it challenging, interesting or relevant. They often feel “different” because of their unique thinking processes and thus become alienated from other students. Too many of them try to fit in and do not reach their potential.

Misconception: Gifted kids love school, get high grades, and greet each new school day with enthusiasm. The gifted student is the one who is most enthusiastic about school and schoolwork.

Reality: Most schools and classroom teaching methods are geared for average students which make it hard for gifted students to get excited about going to school. Some of the most capable students end up not using their academic potential unless they are appropriately challenged and their social and emotional needs are understood and addressed.

Misconception: Teachers love to have gifted students in their classes.

Reality: Some do, but some don’t. Some teachers feel uncomfortable with the unique learning needs of gifted students and are unsure of how to meet the students’ needs. They may also have the responsibility of meeting the needs of a very wide variety of student abilities.

Misconception: Gifted children have intellectual capabilities that allow them to be outstanding in all subjects and areas.

Reality: Academic giftedness is often concentrated in a particular area, including the “hands-on” or manipulative strengths that are not common practice in most classrooms. Most gifted children have a combination of academic strengths and weaknesses. Children can even be gifted in one academic area and learning-disabled in another.

Misconception: High-IQ children are popular, well-adjusted, exceptionally moral, and glowing with psychological health.

Reality: This perception was based on results by Terman’s study in 1922 which defined gifted children not only as academically superior, but also as superior in physique, health and social adjustment, marked by superior moral attitudes. Gifted children are often socially isolated and unhappy unless they are fortunate enough to find others like themselves. Gifted children may face ridicule and taunts about being nerds or geeks. Most children easily pick out the awkward, un-athletic loners, or the “show-offs” who have strange interests and vocabularies that are out of touch with those of their peers.
Misconception: Gifted kids are equally mature in all areas - academic, physical, social and emotional.

**Reality:** Gifted children tend to have “asynchronous” development. That is, their intellectual, social and emotional abilities often develop unevenly, at different rates. An 8-year-old gifted child may sound like a teenager but act like a 6-year-old. These differences in development can be frustrating for the gifted child as well as the children and adults around them.

Misconception: Nearly all gifted students come from upper-, middle-class, professional families. Teachers won’t find them coming from the lower economic and social levels.

**Reality:** There are just as many gifted children from families with a low socio-economic status as there are in the suburbs. Intelligence knows no income, race or socio-economic levels. One of the challenges of school systems is to implement identification methods that are appropriate for all children, including those who do not have strong English-language skills or have not had experiences that more affluent families can afford.

Misconception: Gifted children are destined to become eminent adults.

**Reality:** Many gifted children are more susceptible to emotional and physical problems from being “stressed out” and thus burn out early or choose to hide or deny their abilities. Some, while extremely successful as adults, never do anything genuinely creative. **Besides a high level of ability, personality, motivation, family and school environments, opportunity, and chance play important roles.** The Terman studies and the Stanford studies showed, however, that an unusual proportion of gifted individuals became lawyers, doctors, engineers, college professors, and leaders in government, business, and industry.

Misconception: Some people assert that gifted children are "made" by overzealous parents’ intent on their children's stardom. Parents are cautioned not to push or label their children, to let them have a "normal" childhood. Otherwise, they are told, their children will resent them and lose interest in achieving.

**Reality:** Parents of gifted children are often highly involved in the nurturance of their children's gifts. A high degree of investment and involvement is not a destructive force. It is necessary for a child's gift to be fully developed. Emotional support and understanding from the family are also important for gifted children. **Nature and nurture both play a role in determining whether there is the ability for high levels of intelligence to develop.**
Stephen Ceci, psychologist and professor of developmental psychology at Cornell University, is considered an expert in the development of intelligence and memory. His article, entitled *IQ Intelligence: The Surprising Truth* (2001), presents 12 supported facts about intelligence compiled from earlier works. Some of the highlights of his findings are as follows:

**FACTS ABOUT INTELLIGENCE**

1. IQ correlates with some simple abilities—The higher your intelligence, the faster you process information and the quicker you can solve problems.

2. IQ is affected by school attendance—The longer you remain in school, the smarter you become. Staying in school can prevent your IQ from slipping. IQ declines over summer vacation and with lack of performance. For each year of high school not completed, there is an average loss of 1.8 IQ points. Delaying schooling has adverse effects on IQ.

3. IQ is not influenced by birth order—There is no correlation between birth order and intelligence. However, as a group, smarter people tend to have fewer children than those of lower intelligence.

4. IQ is related to breast-feeding—By age 3, breast-fed babies have an IQ that is from three to eight points higher than bottle-fed babies. (This may be related to the amount of time a mother and child spend together while nursing. It also may be that the immune factors in mothers’ milk prevent children from getting diseases that deplete energy and impair early learning.)

5. IQ varies by birth date—Students born late in the year, as a group, show lower IQ scores. For each year of schooling completed, there is an IQ gain of approximately 3.5 points.

6. IQ evens out with age—Siblings who are raised separately may have marked differences in IQ when they are younger. However, once they reach adulthood, their IQs are more similar. (This probably is due to genetic factors which take priority over environmental ones.)

7. Intelligence is plural, not singular—Three kinds of intelligence are generally recognized: spatial, verbal, and analytical/mathematical. Other recognized gifted authorities have embraced the theory of *multiple intelligences*.

8. IQ is correlated to head size—Based upon IQ tests, the larger a person’s head, the smarter he is. Cranial volume seems to be correlated to IQ. (This correlation was discovered in the Armed Forces where every inductee is given an IQ test and also measured for a helmet.)

9. Intelligence scores are predictive of real-world outcomes—Over their lifetimes, people who have completed more school tend to earn more. College graduates earn over $800,000 more than high school graduates. Those with professional degrees earn nearly $1,600,000 more than college graduates. As a rule, the higher a person’s intellectual ability, the higher her earnings.

10. Intelligence is context-dependent—A person can be really smart in one area and very average in other areas. Being able to reason complexly depends upon what each person is required to think about.

11. IQ is on the rise—Average IQ has risen 20 points with every generation. We are smarter than our parents, and our children very likely will be smarter than we are. The bar continues to rise.

12. IQ may be influenced by the school cafeteria menu—Diet influences brain functioning. *Eat your fish. It’s brain food!* A 14% increase in IQ was noted after preservatives were removed from the cafeteria menu in New York City public schools. This improvement was greatest among remedial students.
Obtain objective data and gather other information.
One of the most important things parents can do is obtain objective data, including achievement and ability test results, as well as information about your child’s learning preferences and interests. Anecdotes and examples of work your child has done at home are also helpful but objective information is the best information you can share with school personnel. Although anecdotes and examples of work students have done at home are helpful, objective data (such as test results) are even more so. You’ll need achievement test results to demonstrate what your child has learned plus above-level testing (using tests that were designed for older students) to give a clear picture of your child’s abilities.

Another type of information you’ll want to gather is how to work within your school system. Learn who the key players are, and understand who makes the decisions. Find allies within the system (your child’s teacher or gifted coordinator may be an excellent advocate). Make a point of understanding how your local system works. Learn the appropriate educational jargon, including terms like differentiation, cluster grouping, self-contained classes, and subject-matter acceleration.

You are responsible for advocating for your child.
You can’t assume school personnel will initiate a change in the standard school program for your child. Although many schools do have systematic identification measures and systematic programs, many do not. Learn as much as you can about your child’s talent area. For example, if your child is especially talented in language arts, you’ll need to learn about options for students with those strengths. If your child is exceptionally talented in math, you need to learn about options for math-talented students. Research outside-of-school opportunities for students, too. Don’t rely on school personnel for this information. In addition, understand that your child may not be able to get all of the challenges he or she needs from your school’s programs. You may need to find other programs in order to meet your child’s needs.

Don’t depend on your child’s school to fulfill all of your child’s needs. Look into opportunities outside of school, such as weekend programs and academic summer camps. School personnel may or may not be aware of those programs. The website, http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/summer.htm, will give you a great start. Many programs offer generous scholarships to students needing financial aid.

If issues arise during the year, it’s always best to start by talking with your child’s teacher. If you approach the principal first, that might be viewed negatively by the teacher.

Differentiation within the regular classroom may be a good starting point for many teachers and talented students. Susan Winebrenner has written a book that is popular with teachers, Teaching Gifted Kids in the Regular Classroom. The book is filled with practical suggestions, and it’s written in a teacher-friendly way.

As you are advocating for your child, it’s helpful to work with your school’s gifted coordinator or gifted teacher. This individual will know something about gifted students as well as be familiar with the system at your school. He/she can be a good advocate for your child and can make suggestions for appropriate changes in the standard school program.

Determine what your child’s needs are.
You might decide to focus on one specific subject area. For example, if your child is really interested in language arts, you might decide to focus on that area this year and not focus on the math placement. We’d like to be able to do everything at once, but sometimes it’s just too much for the school personnel (or the parent!) to handle.

At one point or another, you’ll be asked what you want for your child. Go into a meeting prepared with an answer to that question. Decide what your goals are for your child. Reasonable accommodations for gifted students include: differentiation in the regular classroom, grouping with other talented students within the regular classroom, placing them in a separate class for high-ability students, participating in pullout programs, and moving up a grade for one or more subjects. Other options include working on independent study projects and participating in competitions and science fairs.

Decide what is reasonable to ask your school to do.
Know the limitations of your own school system. Some schools may be able to provide a mentor to work one-on-one with a student or provide supervision for a distance learning course at the appropriate level. Other schools may not have the budget or personnel for such provisions. Adjusting a child’s schedule so he can move up a grade for math may be very easy in a larger school with multiple math periods. In a small school, there may be no way to work out this schedule change. Understand that school personnel have to work within budget and personnel constraints. Try to remain flexible as they suggest alternatives.
Perhaps one of the easiest steps to take in the elementary grades is to request a specific teacher for a child. Jim Delisle (2006) recommends requesting a “style” rather than a particular teacher. For example, you might tell the principal that your child works best when the classroom is structured or when there is a lot of flexibility in assignments.

**Recognize positive developments and keep your interactions positive.**

After you have done all of this research, you may be in the position of having more information than school personnel. This can be a delicate situation! You want to share your knowledge in a manner that is non-confrontational and helpful. Think consciously about how you are perceived by personnel in your child’s school.

Write a letter telling your child's teacher how much you appreciate the differentiated work she has provided for your child in the regular classroom or telling him how much your child enjoyed a specific activity. Send a copy of the letter to the principal, if you like. Write a letter to the school board to comment on a positive experience with your child’s educational program. If this results in the teacher or principal being more willing to advocate for your child, that's a nice bonus! Also, consider volunteering for school activities, such as chaperoning field trips or helping to make bulletin boards.

**Join a parent group, or start one!**
The National Association for Gifted Children (www.nagc.org) is a national organization for parents and teachers of gifted students. Their website offers many suggestions for advocacy. Most states also have statewide organizations, and these often serve as umbrella organizations for local parent groups. Consider joining an affiliated state organization or the local parent group. They provide resources as well as annual conferences and a way to meet other parents in similar situations.

**Tips for Talking to Teachers.**
Sally Yahnke Walker (2002) gave some great suggestions for talking with teachers:

1. Make an appointment. Don't just drop in.
2. Document what your child has done, said, or read.
3. Plan what you're going to say.
4. Choose your words carefully. Try to start with something positive.
5. Build a partnership and negotiate solutions. Work as a team.
6. Be diplomatic, tactful, and respectful.
7. Focus on what your child needs.
8. Listen.
9. Bring along your sense of humor.
10. Summarize what you have discussed and a time line. Plan a follow-up meeting.

**How do you handle the situation where your child isn't happy in school and all your efforts at advocacy aren't yielding results?**

- Make sure your child has at least one good friend. Your child doesn't need 100 friends and doesn't need to feel "popular" all the time. However, your child does need at least one peer who has similar interests. This other child might be a little older or younger than your son or daughter. Try to facilitate their time together.

- How will your child find that one good friend? Try to get him or her involved in a variety of activities: a sport, a musical activity, something with church or scouts. Encourage your child to participate in a summer or weekend program for gifted kids. Many children blossom in those environments. Even if they end up going back to the same situation at their 'regular' school, they know there are places where they fit in better and where academic excellence is admired.

- Try to find other adults to befriend and mentor your child. It doesn't have to be a weekly, formal session. Can your child chat with a high school teacher about a topic of mutual interest? Can the local Rotary or Kiwanis club match your child with an adult who has similar interests?

- Participation in contests and competitions is another way to challenge the student while also giving him/her a peer group.

- Keep reminding yourself that this is temporary. New teachers come along, schools change policies, and new programs are developed.

- Above all, be your child's chief cheerleader. Frequently remind your children that you appreciate their efforts and accomplishments, and you value academic excellence.
Making Decisions about Acceleration

Parents of many exceptionally talented students realize that their children aren’t experiencing a good ‘match’ with the current school curriculum. One of the most common ways to make a better match is through acceleration. Acceleration can be a scary topic, since society in general and many school personnel are extremely concerned about the impact of acceleration on social adjustment. One helpful tool in making decisions about grade-skipping or moving ahead in one subject is the Iowa Acceleration Scale. This tool was designed to facilitate the conversation between parents and school personnel. Rather than focusing on one aspect of acceleration (such as socialization), the IAS helps the parties involved think about all important aspects.

Beginning the conversation about acceleration may be very difficult; some schools even have anti-acceleration policies in place! The two volumes of A Nation Deceived (http://www.nationdeceived.org/) gather pertinent research on the topic and provide support for a well-reasoned argument supporting acceleration for exceptionally talented youth. They provide a good starting point for advocacy.

Can students be involved in advocacy?

When kids are young (preschoolers and early elementary), parents need to make decisions for them. They can certainly tell you when they are unhappy in a school situation, but they aren’t going to be able to tell you how to fix it.

As they get older, students should take on more responsibility for advocating for themselves. Eventually, they can come with you to meetings with school personnel about their programs. Sometimes, a student initiates the discussion about modifying an educational program. For example, a 5th grader wrote a letter to her school principal asking very eloquently to be moved up to 6th grade because she wanted a challenge. She was successful in her request.

What kind of an impact can I have?

It is hard to make changes in the “system.” Getting a school to develop a program for verbally-talented students could take years and it may not be a realistic goal to expect the program to be ready for your child. However, working with your school to make individualized accommodations for your child during the school day could happen as soon as next week.

It’s practical to seek changes for your child that can be accomplished in the near future. However, the changes made for your child highlight the need in the school system for new programs or accommodations for other academically talented youth. As a result, the interactions you have with school personnel on behalf of your child can influence future programs for gifted students. Be assured that your advocacy today can have a positive impact on someone else’s child.

Resources


Parenting Tips on Educational Advocacy: http://www.davidsongifted.org/db/Articles_id_10286.aspx


This article is provided as a service of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to supporting profoundly gifted young people 18 and under. To learn more about the Davidson Institute’s programs, please visit www.DavidsonGifted.org.
Characteristics of Twice-Exceptional Gifted Children

 Twice-exceptional students have significant learning difficulties and the talent or potential for outstanding accomplishments that require special provisions to meet their educational needs. Early identification and intervention is critical; however, giftedness in the twice-exceptional often is identified later than in the average population and is masked by the disability. The disabilities may include auditory processing weaknesses, sensory motor integration issues, visual perceptual difficulties, spatial disorientation, dyslexia, and attention deficits. Recognition of learning difficulties among the gifted is made extremely difficult by virtue of their ability to compensate. A collaborative effort between classroom teachers, special educators, gifted educators, and parents is needed to identify twice-exceptional students and implement appropriate strategies so that gifted students with disabilities can achieve their full potential.

Some guidelines that help in identifying these students are as follows:

- Exceptional Vocabulary
- Difficulty with written expression
- Ability to understand complex ideas
- Easily frustrated
- Wide area of interest
- Highly sensitive
- Creative
- Stubborn and opinionated
- Specific areas of strength
- Inconsistent academic performance
- Highly developed sense of humor
- Curious and inquisitive

2e Twice-Exceptional Newsletter
For parents, teachers and professionals. Helping twice-exceptional children reach their potential.
http://www.2enewsletter.com/
IDENTIFICATION OF HIGH-ABILITY STUDENTS:
Characteristics of High-Ability Students that Tend to Screen Them Out for Identification

- Bored with routine tasks and refuse to do rote classwork/homework
- Resists being moved on into another topic
- Is self-critical and impatient with failures
- Is critical or others, even possibly teachers
- Often disagrees vocally with others and with the teacher: questions reasons for decisions
- Makes jokes or puns at inappropriate times
- Is emotionally sensitive and may over-react, get angry easily or is ready to cry if things go wrong
- Is not interested in details and hands in messy work
- Refuses to accept authority and is non-conforming and stubborn
- Tends to dominate others
- May fail to complete homework and classroom assignments
- May not pay attention to time limits or deadlines
- Is a non-conformist, thus may not be well liked by peers

Many teachers have a narrow definition of gifted, often confusing a bright, high-achieving student who works hard, and completes assignments with a gifted student. (Often, gifted students do not complete assignments and often their work is messy or disorganized!)

Many gifted children are frustrated by the constraints of ordinary classrooms and their abilities go unnoticed. Mistaking a hard-working student for a gifted student, while overlooking the troublemaker or bored student completely, is common. As teachers, it is our responsibility to look at each student as a whole to assess the potential gifted 'intelligences' within them.
CONCOMITANT CHARACTERISTICS:
The interrelationship of the characteristics, needs, and problems of the gifted.

Every behavioral characteristic has its positive and negative side. This includes characteristics that gifted children tend to have. These two-sided attributes are known as concomitant characteristics.

While we should not excuse bad behavior, we can help direct kids to positive outcomes. We also can learn to be more tolerant ourselves by understanding that someone else’s seemingly irritating behavior also may have a very positive side.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Positive Behaviors</th>
<th>Negative Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learns rapidly and easily</td>
<td>Memorizes and masters basic facts quickly</td>
<td>Gets bored easily, resists drill, disturbs others, daydreams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reads intensively</td>
<td>Reads many books and uses library on their own</td>
<td>Neglects other responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced vocabulary</td>
<td>Communicates ideas well</td>
<td>Shows off, invokes peer resentment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retains a quantity of information</td>
<td>Ready recall and response</td>
<td>Monopolizes discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long attention span</td>
<td>Sticks with a task or project</td>
<td>Resists class routine, dislikes interruptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curious, has a variety of interests</td>
<td>Asks questions, gets excited about ideas</td>
<td>Goes on tangents, no follow through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works independently</td>
<td>Creates and invents beyond assigned tasks</td>
<td>Refuses to work with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert and observant</td>
<td>Recognizes problems</td>
<td>Impolitely corrects adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a good sense of humor</td>
<td>Able to laugh at self</td>
<td>Plays cruel jokes or tricks on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehends, recognizes relationships</td>
<td>Able to solve social problems alone</td>
<td>Interferes in the affairs of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High academic achievement</td>
<td>Does school work well</td>
<td>Brags, egotistical, impatient with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent verbal facility</td>
<td>Forceful with words, numbers; leads peers in positive ways</td>
<td>Leads others into negative behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic; challenges ideas</td>
<td>Asserts self and ideas, has sense of own uniqueness</td>
<td>Has few friends, non-conforming, stubborn in beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivated, self-sufficient</td>
<td>Requires minimum teacher direction or help</td>
<td>Is over-aggressive, challenges authority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Raising and nurturing a gifted child can be an exciting yet daunting challenge. Unfortunately, these complicated little people do not come with instruction manuals. The following new definition of giftedness highlights the complexity of raising 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 the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.* (The Columbus Group, 1991, in Morelock, 1992)

**Asynchrony** means being out of sync, both internally and externally. Asynchronous development means that gifted children develop cognitively at a much faster rate than they develop physically and emotionally, posing some interesting problems. For example, ideas forged by 8-year-old minds may be difficult to produce with 5-year-old hands. Further, advanced cognition often makes gifted children aware of information that they are not yet emotionally ready to handle. They tend to experience all of life with greater intensity, rendering them emotionally complex. These children usually do not fit the developmental norms for their age; they have more advanced play interests and often are academically far ahead of their age peers. The brighter the child, the greater the asynchrony and potential vulnerability. Therefore, parents who are aware of the inherent developmental differences of their children can prepare themselves to act as their advocates.

**Some of the earliest signs of giftedness include:**
- unusual alertness in infancy
- less need for sleep in infancy
- long attention span
- high activity level
- smiling or recognizing caretakers early
- intense reactions to noise, pain, frustration
- advanced progression through the developmental milestones
- extraordinary memory
- enjoyment and speed of learning
- early and extensive language development
- fascination with books
- curiosity
- excellent sense of humor
- abstract reasoning and problem-solving skills
- vivid imagination (e.g., imaginary companions)
- sensitivity and compassion

If a child exhibits a majority of these characteristics, parents may wish to have the child assessed by an experienced examiner to find out if the child is gifted. Firstborn children tend to be recognized more often than their siblings. When one child in the family is gifted, it is quite possible that others may also be gifted. Early identification is recommended (ages 3 through 8) because it permits early intervention, as important for gifted as for any other children with special needs.
Responsive Parenting
Children learn first from their parents. Parents who spend time with their gifted child are more able to tune in to their child's interests and respond by offering appropriate educational enrichment opportunities. It is important that parents read to their children frequently, even when the children are capable of reading to themselves. In the early years, parents can help their children discover their personal interests, expose their children to their own interests, and encourage their children to learn about a wide variety of subjects such as art, nature, music, museums, and sports. Children who are attracted to a particular area need opportunities to explore that field in depth. Home stimulation and support of interests is vital to the development of talents. Following the lead of the child will help the child flourish.

Family Relationships
Gifted children often can exhaust and overwhelm a new mother and father. Gifted infants often sleep less than other babies and require extra stimulation when they are awake. It is helpful to have extended family in the home, grandparents who live nearby, a close community of friends or relatives, or a teenager in the neighborhood who can spend some time with the child so that the primary caretakers can get some rest to do other things. For single parents, such support is particularly important. From the time they can talk, gifted children are constantly asking questions and often challenge authority. "Do it because I said so" doesn't work with these children. Generally, parents who take the time to explain requests get more cooperation than do more authoritarian parents. If these children are spoken to and listened to with consideration and respect, they tend to respond respectfully.

As children get older, a family meeting can be a good way of sharing responsibility and learning negotiation skills. Family meetings can provide a forum where children have a voice as a family member, and provide avenues for avoiding power struggles that otherwise can occur. It is important for gifted children to feel emotionally supported by the family, even when there are disagreements.

School Placement
Gifted children generally benefit by spending at least some time in the classroom with children of similar abilities. Their educational program should be designed to foster progress at their own rate of development. Parents who become involved with the school can help administrators and teachers be responsive to the needs of these children. Open, flexible environments provide students with opportunities for choices, and enhance independence and creativity.

Early entrance or other forms of acceleration may be considered when the school gifted program is not sufficiently challenging or when there is no opportunity for gifted children to be grouped with age peers who are intellectually advanced. Early entrance is the easiest form of acceleration, academically and socially. It may be best to accelerate girls before third grade or after ninth grade, when they are less bonded to their peer group. Boys are usually more willing to skip grades at any point in their school program. When a child expresses a willingness to be accelerated, the chances are good that an excellent social adjustment will be made.

In the preschool and primary years, mixed-aged groupings are beneficial, as long as the gifted child is not the oldest in the group. Gifted, creative boys are often held back in the primary years because of so-called "immaturity," the inability to socialize with age peers who are less developmentally advanced. When a 5-year-old boy with an 8-year-old mind cannot relate to 5-year-olds, nothing is gained by having him repeat a grade: he is then a 6-year-old with a 9-year-old mind trying to relate to 5-year-olds! The best solution is to find him true peers, boys his own age who are intellectually advanced. Retention is not recommended.
Parent Advocacy
Gifted children need strong, responsible advocates, and parent groups can make a difference. It takes persistence of large groups of parents to assure that provisions for gifted children are kept firmly in place. Parents of children who are gifted need opportunities to share parenting experiences with each other, and parent groups can provide a place where that can happen. It is important for parents of any children with special needs to meet with the teachers early in the school year. When parents and teachers work together, appropriate programs can be developed and problems can be caught early. It is helpful for parents to offer to assist their child's teacher by making or locating supplemental materials, helping in the classroom or library, offering expertise to small groups of students, or finding others who can provide other enrichment experiences. Effective parents stay involved in their children's education and informed about gifted education in general. When a teacher makes a special effort to understand or assist a gifted child, a note to the teacher or to the principal is generally appreciated.

Conclusion
The key to raising gifted children is respect: respect for their uniqueness, respect for their opinions and ideas, respect for their dreams. Gifted children need parents who are responsive and flexible, who will go to bat for them when they are too young to do so for themselves. It is painful for parents to watch their children feeling out of sync with others, but it is unwise to emphasize too greatly the importance of fitting in. Children get enough of that message in the outside world. At home, children need to know that their uniqueness is cherished and that they are appreciated as persons just for being themselves.
Gifted Education Resources

National Association for Gifted Children
http://www.nagc.org

An estimated 3,000,000 gifted children sit in classrooms across the U.S. today. Because learning styles and levels vary widely, the needs of "smart kids" are far too often overlooked in the logical quest to meet minimum standards. But that begs the question: What is a maximum standard and how can we shift the focus in the U.S.? For over 50 years, NAGC has worked to increase public awareness about these key questions and to affect positive change. The 8,000+ members of NAGC work on behalf of these 3,000,000 students who represent a good portion of the oft-heralded "pipeline of talent."

New Jersey Association For Gifted Children
http://www.njagc.org/

NJAGC, a volunteer organization which reaches out to parents, educators and friends of gifted children, is a state chapter of the NAGC.

New Jersey - Parents of Gifted Offspring (POGO), Montclair State University
http://www.montclair.edu/pages/gifttalent/pogo.html

POGO was established to provide opportunities to meet and discuss raising gifted children. Led by experts in the fields of gifted education and psychology, free POGO seminars take place while students are in classes on the Montclair State University campus. All parents of gifted students, not just those whose children are enrolled in POGO, are invited to participate.

Davidson Institute's GT-CyberSource
http://www.gt-cybersource.org

GT-CyberSource is your gateway to resources for and about gifted students. Visit this site frequently to find out what's going on in the gifted community at large and even locally.

Hoagies Gifted Education Page
http://www.hoagiesgifted.org

Comprehensive source for gifted education.

Uniquely Gifted
http://www.uniquelygifted.org/

Resources for gifted children with special needs. This site is named after the book Uniquely Gifted: Identifying and Meeting the Needs of the Twice-Exceptional Student, edited by Kiesa Kay.