



# Parenting from Womb to Adolescent

IAP GDBP Academy

## Gifted Child! A Challenge

➤ **Dr. Suneel Godbole**

**Developmental Pediatrician, Chiranjeev Child Diet & Development Centre, Pune.**

Some children are extraordinary. Chandrashekhar-a 12 year boy from our own India, is the smallest Microsoft Certified Computer Expert! Master blaster Sachin Tendulkar did his first century in International Cricket at the age of just fourteen! Abigail Sin (10 years old) is Singapore's most celebrated young pianist! And the list goes on.....!! These children; popularly known as 'Gifted Children' pose multiple issues; right from identifying their giftedness up to managing them the best!

## I. Definitions of Giftedness

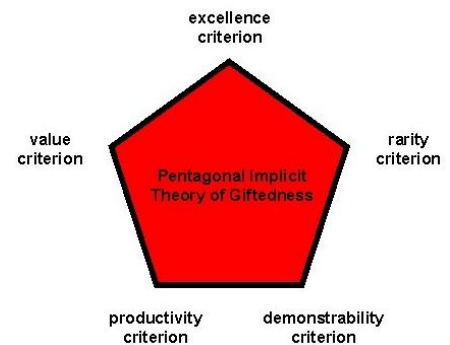
Current literature contains a multitude of synonyms for giftedness, including bright, talented, high IQ, advanced, prodigy, precocious, exceptional, superior, creative, rapid learner, brilliant, genius, and so on. Similar to multiple names: researchers use different definitions to define 'Giftedness'. The Merriam Webster's College Dictionary defines the term "gifted" as: Having great natural ability and revealing a special gift. "Gifted" children have also been defined as those children who by the nature of their outstanding abilities are capable of high performance.



Joseph Renzulli (1978) noted that people who have been successful in life possess three particular traits-high levels of ability, creativity, and task commitment. The interaction of these three basic clusters of human traits may result in gifted behaviors in general and specific performance areas. Howard Gardner (1983) identified 8 multiple intelligences suggesting that every child is 'smart' in one or either intelligence.

Robert Sternberg's Pentagonal Implicit Theory of Giftedness (1995): Sternberg's says that giftedness could not be possibly captured by a single number and has introduced a theory that describes a gifted person as one who meets the following five criteria:

1. Excellence: The individual is superior in some dimension(s) relative to peers.
2. Rarity: The individual possesses a skill or attribute that is rare among peers.
3. Productivity: The individual must produce something in the area of giftedness.
4. Demonstrability: The skill of giftedness demonstrable through valid assessments.
5. Value: The child shows superior performance in a dimension that is valued by the society.

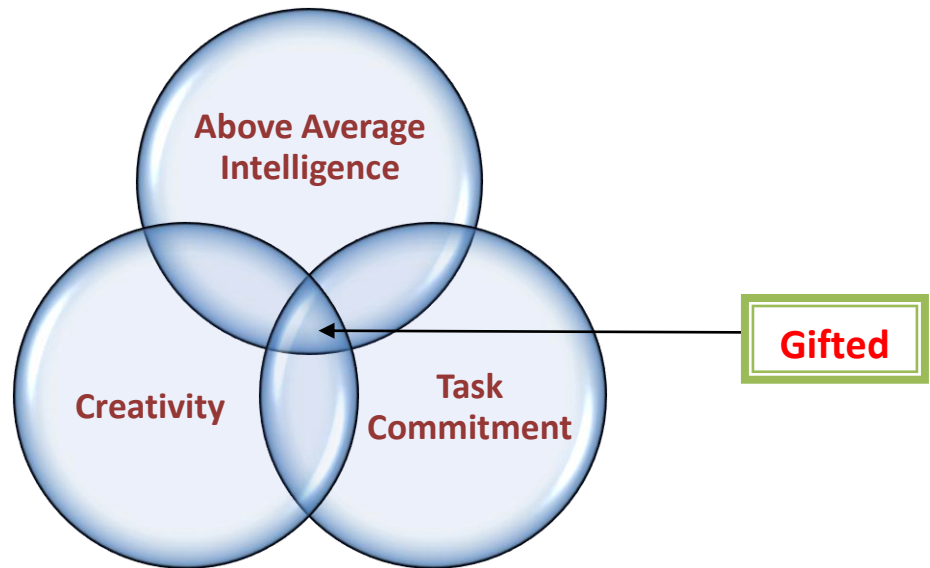


Francoys Gagne (2004) believes that gifted people are born with a biological potential that will allow them to develop high ability in one or more of the areas of development. He provided a model of giftedness that expands on this idea. The natural abilities (intellectual, creative, socio-active and sensory-motor domains) in an individual with exceptional inter- and intra personal intelligence; when nurtured by positive environmental

influences will develop outstanding abilities or talent in various fields (academics, sports, arts, technology, etc.).

## II. Identification of a Gifted Child

Various checklists are developed by researchers to identify a 'Gifted Child'. The 3 Ring model of Joseph Renzulli; now called the School wide Enrichment Model, gives the simplest criteria to identify 'Giftedness'.



### **Gifted**

#### **A. Above average intelligence**

1. Advanced vocabulary: Start talking, walking early!
2. Has a good memory and remembers details of conversations or stories.
3. Retains information easier and longer
4. Concentrates on certain activities much longer than other children of age
5. Large fund of information. Starts reading early and reads a lot.
6. Learns and comprehends quickly and easily
7. Generalizes, connects, synergizes and makes abstractions-diverging and converging.
8. Makes judgments and decisions quickly

#### **B. Creativity**

1. Curiosity
2. Has wide imagination

3. Transforms combines and elaborates ideas fluidly
4. Open, flexible and original
5. Problem solving ability
6. Sees consequences and implications easily
7. Provides multiple solutions or responses to problems
8. Finds subtle humor, paradox or discrepancies intellectually playful!

**C. Task commitment:**

1. Sets own goals or standards
2. Intensive involvements in preferred problems and tasks
3. Enthusiastic about interests and activities
4. Needs little external motivation when pursuing tasks
5. High energy
6. Completes and shares products, however may not be able to follow through
7. Assumes responsibility
8. Leadership ability

**III. Problems of 'Being Gifted'**

Everything is not always 'Positive' with gifted children. They may have multiple problems; which make their life difficult:

1. Asynchronous development is relatively common among gifted children. This means that a child's intellectual, social, emotional and physical developments are at different stages. This uneven development results in academic and social maladjustment. Co-morbidities like learning disability, ADHD are common in gifted children!

2. Characteristics of giftedness can vary greatly between children, even between children in the same family. So all gifted children are not alike. They possess exceptional qualities in different fields of life. But this makes extremely difficult for teachers to teach them.

3. Social mal-adjustment: Gifted children sometimes lack social skills. They are not accepted by friends and even teachers; because of high degree of perfectionism, adamant behavior and inability to accept

discrepancies. Gifted children knowingly or unknowingly tend to challenge the authority, resist conventional approaches or responses, and criticize others. They make jokes or puns at inappropriate times. They often disagree with others in a loud, bossy manner. Obviously this is not accepted by the society.

4. As these children learn faster: They find school boring! They frequently daydream. They may be disruptive and interruptive. Once they understand a topic, they lose the interest in it. This leads to incomplete assignments and projects, resist completing rote or repetitive tasks.

5. Emotional oversensitivity: Gifted children are most of the times overly sensitive. Characterized by an intensity of feeling, a marked ability to empathize with others, and physical expression of feelings, these children can find it painfully difficult to make new friends, who cry at the smallest frustration.



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6. Sensory over-excitability: Some gifted children may have sensory issues. They manifest themselves as extreme sensitivity to touch; delight with the aesthetic things in life, such as art, music, fabric, surroundings; extreme dislike or love for certain foods due to specific textures or tastes; sensitivity to odors or chemicals in the environment; or any other sensory-related experiences.

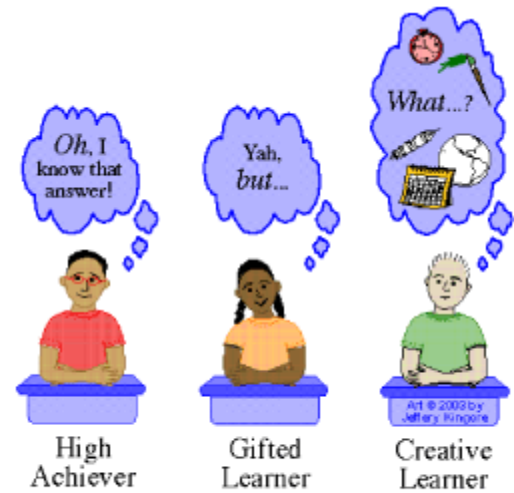
7. Twice exceptional students: Twice-exceptional students are identified as gifted in one or more areas of exceptionality (specific academics, general intellectual ability, creativity, leadership or performing arts). These students are also identified with a disability such as a learning disability, significant emotional disability, physical disability, sensory disability or ADHD. Twice exceptional students are difficult to identify because their strengths and weaknesses may mask each other, creating confusion between being gifted and having a disability.

8. Vision problems: Many gifted children become early readers because they are cognitively ready to decode the written word. However, eye sight and cognitive development may not progress at the same rate. Toddlers are far-sighted. Reading demands focusing on near objects causing visual disturbances!

9. Associated physical issues: Gifted children often show co-morbidities like clumsiness, lack of coordination, poor balance, delayed choice of handedness, poor pencil grip, slow handwriting speed, inability to cross the midline of the body without switching hands, difficulty cutting or drawing figures, and avoidance of motor tasks.

## IV. Assessment of Giftedness

1. Use of appropriate checklists to identify 'Giftedness,
2. Academic performance and teacher's observations, Grade level assessment.
3. Analysis of intelligence quotient on standardized tests like ICIT, WISC, etc. But one has to analyze these children separately on subsets as 'gifted children' tend to do exceptionally well on one subset and falter miserably on another.
4. Behavior observations in different settings: school, family and social events.
5. Assessment of emotional quotient; especially in adolescent children.
6. Assessment of 'Multiple Intelligences, especially creativity, art, music skills!
7. Analysis of co-morbidities like Learning differences, ADHD
8. Physical, medical assessment especially vision checkup.



Response to a Question

High Achiever	Gifted	Creative Thinker
Strives for 'Marks' in exams	Not interested in 'Marks'	Not interested in 'Marks'
Enjoys School	Enjoys own way of learning	Enjoys new learning and creation
Hard worker	Requires less efforts to learn	Quickly grasps basic concepts
Good Concentration	Concentrated only when decides	Remains in own world/thoughts
Knows answers of known questions	Knows answers of unknown questions also. Asks questions!	Knows answers more than the expected one
Enjoys same age friends	Prefers adults or elder children	Prefers less friends
Likes to finish project	Enjoys process, not the result	May divert to some other project

## V. Every Smart Child is not 'Gifted'!

Sometimes parents presume that a smart child or a high achiever child is 'Gifted'. There is a difference between being high achiever, being creative thinker and being gifted, and it has to do with the degree of a child's ability and talent.

## **VI. Management of a 'Gifted Child'**

Managing a 'Gifted Child' is actually more difficult than a child with only learning differences or a child with ADHD or even a slow learner. Management plan for 'Gifted Child' is an IEP that is Individualized Education Plan developed by joint efforts of School teacher, Remedial Teacher, Psychologist, Parents and Developmental Pediatrician.

### ***Developing an IEP involves six interrelated stages***

1. Identifying needs: Assessment and interviews
2. Setting the direction: Short-term and long-term goal setting
3. Creating a plan: Team approach.
4. Implementing the IEP: Close monitoring, age appropriate cluster teaching in motivated schools aware of and ready to manage 'Gifted children'.
5. Reviewing and revising: Continuous process
6. Transition planning: Especially with respect to career guidance.

## **VII. Pediatrician's Job!**

1. Identifying, understanding and reassuring 'gifted children' and their parents.
2. Watch for co-morbidities. 'Being gifted' does not mean 'All is well!' Counsel the parents for the same. But 'Avoid labeling!
3. Rule out associated physical problems; especially visual and sensory-motor issues!
4. Helping to build the team of necessary resource persons.
5. Suggesting 'Inputs' appropriate for 'Cognitive Level' rather than those for 'Age'.
6. 'Being gifted' is also troublesome and sometimes frustrating to the child and parents. We can reassure, reward, remediate these children and build their confidence.
7. Suggest 'Higher level reading, Puzzles, software programming, word games' as these mental challenges keep 'Gifted Child' busy.
8. Planned introduction to 'Music, Arts, Sports and Nature Trails' will keep these kids busy.
9. Suggest 'Projects' in which the 'Process' is more challenging than the 'Result'. Accept if child leaves the project!
10. Help parents of 'Gifted Children' to form their own support group.



## VIII. Parenting a 'Gifted Child'

Parents play an especially important role in developing the special capabilities of a young gifted child. To be effective, parents should:

1. Promote their child's growing need for independence;
2. Gifted child needs more praise when they succeed and 'more reassurance' when they fail!
3. Set clear limits and guidelines. Communicate clearly and with enthusiasm;
4. Expand vocabulary by using new words;
5. Provide a variety of learning materials, especially books;
6. Give puzzles and challenges to their brain!
7. Help develop special skills;
8. Find playmates that have similar interests (young gifted children sometimes enjoy the company of older children);
9. Promote creativity and encourage the child to try new things that help value learning and creativity;
10. Read to, and engage in, creative hobbies with the child.



*"If we did what we are capable of doing, we would astound ourselves."*

Thomas Edison

### Points to remember

- Gifted children possess three particular traits high level of ability, creativity and task commitment.
- A gifted child should have the following five criteria:
  1. Excellence: In some dimensions relative to peers.
  2. Rarity: The child possesses a skill or attribute that is rare among peers.
  3. Productivity: The individual must produce something in area of giftedness.
  4. Demonstrability: Skill should be demonstrable through valid assessments.
  5. Value: Child shows superior performance that is of value to the society.
- Problem areas of 'Gifted child' could be asynchronous development, social mal adjustment, emotional oversensitivity and sensory over excitability.



- Gifted children often show clumsiness, poor balance, delayed choice of handedness, poor pencil grip, slow handwriting speed, etc.
- Individualized Education Plan should be developed by school teacher, remedial teacher, psychologist, parents and developmental pediatrician.
- Parents of gifted child should promote independence, more praise when they succeed and more reassurance when they fail. Parents should help the child to develop his special skills, by providing him learning material, books, and thus promote creativity.