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Profiles of the gifted and talented

Author(s): George T. Betts, Maureen Neihart

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Abstract

After several years of observations, interviews, and reviews of literature, the authors have developed six profiles of gifted and talented children and youth. These profiles help educators and parents to look closely at the feelings, behaviors, and needs of the gifted and talented. Also, tips on identification of each profile are included as well as information on facilitating the gifted and talented in the school and home.

Gifted children are usually discussed as an undifferentiated group. When they are differentiated, it tends to be on the basis of differences in intellectual abilities, talents, or interests rather than from a total or "gestalt" point of view in terms of behavior, feelings, and needs. For example, creatively gifted, intellectually gifted, learning disabled gifted, and artistically gifted are among the different categories that have been reported. The purpose of this article is to describe a theoretical model to profile the gifted and talented that differentiates gifted individuals on the basis of behavior, feelings, and needs. The matrix describes and compares the needs, feelings and behaviors of six different profiles of gifted children. This model serves to increase awareness among educators and parents of differences among gifted children and provides guidelines for identifying gifted children. It can also be used to develop appropriate educational goals for the gifted. These types are offered as a generalization to facilitate the task of identifying and guiding gifted children in all aspects of development. They are not intended to describe anyone child completely.

Personality is the result of life experiences and genetic makeup. All gifted children are not affected by their special abilities in the same way. Gifted children interact with and are influenced by their families, their education, their relationships, and their personal development. Experience with gifted children in a variety of settings has served to increase awareness that the gifted cannot be seen as one group (Strang, 1962).

Little has been done, however, to distinguish among groups of gifted children. Roeper (1982) proposed five types of gifted children based strictly on the approaches gifted children use to cope with their emotions. She identified the perfectionist, the child/adult, the winner of the competition, the self-critic, and the well-integrated child. She focused on the development of coping styles and the ways in which gifted children experience and express feelings.

Few studies focus on a holistic perspective of the gifted child. Most address one aspect of development or an area of achievement or interest. (Colangelo & Parker, 1981; Delisle, J.R., 1982; Gregory & Stevens-Long, 1986; Kaiser, Berndt, & Stanley, 1987; Schwolinski & Reynolds, 1985). The development of the whole child must be addressed, taking into account the interaction of emotional, social, cognitive, and physical factors. It is essential to remember that "A child is a total entity; a combination of many characteristics. Emotions cannot be treated separately from intellectual awareness or physical development; all intertwine and influence each other" (Roeper, 1982, p. 21). Giftedness should not be defined by separate categories; every aspect of personality and development influences and interacts with every other aspect. Giftedness should be examined as a construct that impacts on personality.

Profiles of the Gifted and Talented

The following presentation of six different profiles of gifted and talented students can provide information for educators and parents about the behavior, feelings, and needs of gifted and talented children and youth. It is important to remember that this is a theoretical concept that can provide insights for facilitating the growth of the gifted and talented, not a diagnostic classification model (see Figure 1).

Putting The Research To Use

It is essential that educators and parents understand the cognitive, emotional, and social needs of the gifted and talented. "Profiles of the gifted and talented" provides a framework for a better understanding of these students by looking closely at their feelings, behavior, and needs. Additional information is provided concerning adult and peer perceptions, identification, and home and school interactions. Parents and educators use the profiles to gain a deeper awareness of the gifted and talented. They are also able to use the information for inservice and courses concerning the nature and needs of the gifted and talented. Furthermore, educators can present the information directly to students in order to help them develop more insight into their own needs and behavior. "Profiles of the gifted and talented" is a starting point for those who want to develop a greater awareness and insight into these students. The application of the approach will provide deeper and greater understanding of our gifted and talented.

Additionally, children and youth should not be defined by anyone of the following categories. The behavior, feelings, and needs of gifted and talented children change frequently when they are young, but as years pass there will be fewer abrupt changes and they may settle into one or two profile areas. This approach provides a new understanding of the gifted and talented and new opportunities for developing techniques and strategies for facilitating the cognitive, emotional and social growth of these children.

Type I

The Successful

Perhaps as many as 90% of identified gifted students in school programs are Type I's. Children who demonstrate the behavior, feelings, and needs classified as Type I's have learned the system. They have listened closely to their parents and teachers. After discovering what "sells" at home and at school, they begin to display appropriate behavior. They learn well and are able to score high on achievement tests and tests of intelligence. As a result, they are usually identified for placement in programs for the gifted. Rarely do they exhibit behavior problems because they are eager for approval from teachers, parents and other adults.

These are the children many believe will "make it on their own." However, Type I's often become bored with school and learn to use the system in order to get by with as little effort as possible. Rather than pursue their own interests and goals in school, they tend to go through the motions of schooling, seeking structure and direction from instructors. They are dependent upon parents and teachers. They fail to learn needed skills and attitudes for autonomy, but they do achieve. Overall, these children may appear to have positive self-concepts because they have been affirmed for their achievements. They are liked by peers and are included in social groups. They are dependent on the system but are not aware that they have deficiencies because of the reinforcement they receive from adults who are pleased with them and their achievement. However, Goertzel and Goertzel (1962) concluded that the brightest children in the classroom may become competent but unimaginative adults who do not fully develop their gifts and talents. It seems that these children have lost both their creativity and autonomy.

Gifted young adults who may underachieve in college and later adulthood come from this group. They do not possess the necessary skills, concepts, and attitudes necessary for life-long learning. They are well adjusted to society but are not well prepared for the ever-changing challenges of life.

Type II

The Challenging

Type II's are the divergently gifted. Many school systems fail to identify Type II gifted children for programs unless the programs have been in place at least five years and substantial inservicing has been done with teachers. Type II's typically possess a high degree of creativity and may appear to be obstinate, tactless, or sarcastic. They often question authority and may challenge the teacher in front of the class. They do not conform to the system, and they have not learned to use it to their advantage. They receive little recognition and few rewards or honors. Their interactions at school and at home often involve conflict.

These children feel frustrated because the school system has not affirmed their talents and abilities. They are struggling with their self-esteem. They may or may not feel included in the social group. Some Type II's also challenge their peers, and therefore are often not included or welcomed in activities or group projects; on the other hand, some Type II's have a sense of humor and creativity that is very appealing to peers. Nevertheless their spontaneity may be disruptive in the classroom. In spite of their creativity, Type II's often possess negative self-concepts.

Type II's may be "at risk" as eventual dropouts for drug addiction or delinquent behavior if appropriate interventions are not made by junior high. Parents of gifted high school students who drop out of school (Type IV) frequently note that their children exhibited Type II behaviors in upper elementary school or junior high. Although this relationship has not been validated empirically, it carries significant implications that merit serious consideration.

Type III

The Underground

The Type III gifted child is known as "the underground gifted." Generally, these are middle school females although males may also want to hide their giftedness. If a gifted boy goes underground, it tends to happen later, in high school, and typically in response to the pressure to participate in athletics.

In general, Type III's are gifted girls whose belonging needs rise dramatically in middle school (Kerr, 1985). They begin to deny their talent in order to feel more included with a non-gifted peer group. Students who are highly motivated and intensely interested in academic or creative pursuits may undergo an apparently sudden radical transformation, losing all interest in previous passions. Type III's frequently feel insecure and anxious. Their changing needs are often in conflict with the expectations of teachers and parents. All too often, adults react to them in ways that only increase their resistance and denial. There is a tendency to push these children, to insist that they continue with their educational program no matter how they feel. Type III's often seem to benefit from being accepted as they are at the time.

Although Type III's should not be permitted to abandon all projects or advanced classes, alternatives should be explored for meeting their

academic needs while they are undergoing this transition. Challenging resistant adolescents may alienate them from those who can help meet their needs and long-term goals.

Type IV

The Dropouts

Type IV gifted students are angry. They are angry with adults and with themselves because the system has not met their needs for many years and they feel rejected. They may express this anger by acting depressed and withdrawn or by acting out and responding defensively. Frequently, Type IV's have interests that lie outside the realm of the regular school curriculum and they fail to receive support and affirmation for their talent and interest in these unusual areas. School seems irrelevant and perhaps hostile to them. For the most part, Type IV's are high school students, although occasionally there may be an elementary student who attends school sporadically or only on certain days and has in essence "dropped out" emotionally and mentally if not physically.

Type IV students are frequently gifted children who were identified very late, perhaps not until high school. They are bitter and resentful as a result of feeling rejected and neglected. Their self-esteem is very low, and they require a close working relationship with an adult they can trust. Traditional programming is no longer appropriate for Type IV's. Family counseling is strongly recommended, and the Type IV youth should also be given individual counseling. Diagnostic testing is also necessary to identify possible areas for remediation.

Type V

The Double-Labeled

Type V refers to gifted children who are physically or emotionally handicapped in some way, or who have learning disabilities. The vast majority of gifted programs do not identify these children, nor do they offer differentiated programming that addresses and integrates their special needs. Fortunately, research on the effective identification of these children has been promising, and suggestions do exist for ways to provide programming alternatives (Daniels, 1983; Fox, Brody, & Tobin, 1983; Gunderson, Maesch, & Rees, 1988; Maker, 1977; and Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

Type V students often do not exhibit behaviors that schools look for in the gifted. They may have sloppy handwriting or disruptive behaviors that make it difficult for them to complete work, and they often seem confused about their inability to perform school tasks. They show symptoms of stress; they may feel discouraged, frustrated, rejected, helpless, or isolated.

These children may deny that they are having difficulty by claiming that activities or assignments are "boring" or "stupid." They may use their humor to demean others in order to bolster their own lagging self-esteem. They urgently want to avoid failures and are unhappy about not living up to their own expectations. They may be very skilled at intellectualization as a means of coping with their feelings of inadequacy. They are often impatient and critical and react stubbornly to criticism.

Traditionally, these students are either ignored because they are perceived as average or referred for remedial assistance. School systems tend to focus on their weaknesses and fail to nurture their strengths or talents.

TYPE VI

The Autonomous Learner

The Type VI gifted child is the autonomous learner. Few gifted children demonstrate this style at a very early age although parents may see evidence of the style at home. Like the Type I's, these students have learned to work effectively in the school system. However, unlike the Type I's who strive to do as little as possible, Type VI's have learned to use the system to create new opportunities for themselves. They do not work for the system; they make the system work for them. Type VI's have strong, positive self-concepts because their needs are being met; they are successful, and they receive positive attention and support for their accomplishments as well as for who they are. They are well respected by adults and peers and frequently serve in some leadership capacity within their school or community.

Type VI students are independent and self-directed. They feel secure designing their own educational and personal goals. They accept themselves and are able to take risks. An important aspect of the Type VI is their strong sense of personal power. They realize they can create change in their own lives, and they do not wait for others to facilitate change for them. They are able to express their feelings, goals, and needs freely and appropriately.

Conclusions

This matrix will be useful in a number of ways. One use is as a tool for inservicing educators about gifted and talented children and youth in general and about the differentiated social and emotional needs of the specified types in particular. The model can also be used as a teaching tool in order to expand students' awareness and understanding of the meaning of giftedness and the impact it has on their learning and relationships."

The model may also serve as a theoretical base for empirical research in the areas of definition, identification, educational planning, counseling, and child development. By looking closely at the behavior and feelings of gifted and talented youth, better educational programming may be developed to meet their diversified needs.

Putting The Research To Use

It is essential that educators and parents understand the cognitive, emotional, and social needs of the gifted and talented. "Profiles of the gifted and talented" provides a framework for a better understanding of these students by looking closely at their feelings, behavior, and needs. Additional information is provided concerning adult and peer perceptions, identification, and home and school interactions. Parents and educators use the profiles to gain a deeper awareness of the gifted and talented. They are also able to use the information for inservice and courses concerning the nature and needs of the gifted and talented. Furthermore, educators can present the information directly to students in order to help them develop more insight into their own needs and behavior. "Profiles of the gifted and talented" is a starting point for those who want to develop a greater awareness and insight into these students. The application of the approach will provide deeper and greater understanding of our gifted and talented.

PROFILES OF THE GIFTED & TALENTED

Figure 1

FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES	BEHAVIORS	NEEDS	ADULTS & PEERS PERCEPTIONS OF TYPE	IDENTIFICATION	HOME SUPPORT	SCHOOL SUPPORT
-Boredom -Dependent -Positive self-concept -Anxious -Guilty about failure -Extrinsic motivation -Responsible for others -Diminish feelings of self and rights to their emotion -Self critical	-Perfectionist -High Achiever -Seeks teacher approval and structure -Non-risk taking -Does well academically -Accepts & conforms -Dependent	-To see deficiencies -To be challenged -Assertiveness skills -Autonomy -Help with boredom -Appropriate curriculum	-Loved by teachers -Admired by peers -Loved and accepted by parents	-Grade point average -IQ Tests -Teacher nominations	-Independence -Ownership -Freedom to make choices -Time for personal interests -Risk taking experiences	-Accelerated and enriched curriculum -Time for personal interests -Compacted learning experiences -Opportunities to be with intellectual peers -Development of independent learning skills -In-depth studies -Mentorships -College & career counseling
-Boredom -Frustration -Low self-esteem -Impatient -Defensive -Heightened sensitivity -Uncertain about social roles	-Corrects teacher -Questions rules, policies -Is honest, direct -Has mood swings -Demonstrates inconsistent work habits -Has poor self control -Is creative -Prefers highly active & questioning approach -Stands up for convictions -Is competitive	-To be connected with others -To learn tact, flexibility, self-awareness, self control, acceptance -Support for creativity -Contractual systems	-Find them irritating -Rebellious -Engaged in power struggle -See them as creative -Discipline problem -Peers see them as entertaining -Want to change them -Don't view as gifted	-Peer Recommendations -Parent nomination -Interviews -Performance -Recommendation from a significant, non-related adult -Creativity Testing -Teacher advocate	-Acceptance and understanding -Allow them to pursue interest -Advocate for them at school -Modeling appropriate behavior -Family projects	-Tolerance -Placement with appropriate teacher -Cognitive & social skill development -Direct and clear communication with child -Give permission for feelings -Studies in-depth -Mentorships build self-esteem -Behavioral contracting
-Unsure -Pressured -Confused -Guilty -Insecure -Diminished feelings of self and right to their emotions	-Denies talent -Drops out of G/T and advanced classes -Resists challenges -Wants to belong socially -Changes friends	-Freedom to make choices -To be aware of conflicts -Awareness of feelings -Support for abilities -Involvement with gifted peers -Career/college info -Self-acceptance	-Viewed as leaders or unrecognized -Seen as average and successful -Perceived to be compliant -Seen as quiet/shy -Adults see them as unwilling to risk -Viewed as resistive	-Gifted peer nomination -Home nomination -Community nomination -Achievement testing -IQ Tests -Performance -Teacher advocate	-Acceptance of underground -Provide college & career planning experiences -Time to be with same age peers -Provide gifted role models -Model life-long learning -Give freedom to make choice	-Recognize & properly place -Give permission to take time out from G/T classes -Provide same sex role models -Continue to give college & career information
-Resentment -Angry -Depressed -Explosive -Poor self-concept -Defensive -Burn-out	-Has intermittent attendance -Doesn't complete tasks -Pursues outside interests -"Spaced out" in	-An individualized program -Intense support -Alternatives (separate, new opportunities) -Counseling	-Adults are angry with them -Peers are judgmental -Seen as loners, dropouts, dopers, or air heads	-Review cumulative folder -Interview earlier teachers -Discrepancy between IQ and demonstrated achievement	-Seek counseling for family	-Diagnostic testing -Group counseling for young students -Nontraditional study skills

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> class -Is self-abusive -Isolates self -Is creative -Criticizes self & others -Does inconsistent work -Is disruptive, acts out -Seems average or below -Is defensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (individual, group, and family) -Remedial help with skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reject them and ridicule -Seen as dangerous and rebellious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incongruities and inconsistencies in performance -Creativity testing -Gifted peer recommendation -Demonstrated performance in non-school areas 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -In-depth studies -Mentorships -Alternative out of classroom learning experiences -G.E.D.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Powerless -Frustrated -Low self-esteem -Unaware -Angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Demonstrates inconsistent work -Seems average or below -May be disruptive or acts out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emphasis on strengths -Coping skills -G/T support group -Counseling -Skill development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seen as "weird" -Seen as "dumb" -Viewed as helpless -Avoided by peers -Seen as average or below in ability -Perceived to require a great deal of imposed structure -Seen only for the disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Scatter of 11 points or more on WISC or WAIS -Recommendation of significant others -Recommendation from informed special ed. teacher -Interview -Performance -Teacher Advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recognize gifted abilities -Challenge them -Provide risk-taking opportunities -Advocate for child at school -Do family projects -Seek counseling for family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Placement in gifted program -Provide needed resources -Provide alternative learning experiences -Begin investigations and explorations -Give time to be with peers -Give individual counseling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Self confident -Self accepting -Enthusiastic -Accepted by others -Supported -Desire to know & learn -Accepts failure -Intrinsic motivation -Personal power -Accepts others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Has appropriate social skill -Works independently -Develops own goals -Follows through -Works without approval -Follows strong areas of passion -Is creative -Stands up for convictions -Takes risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advocacy -Feedback -Facilitation -Support for risks -Appropriate opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accepted by peers and adults -Admired for abilities -Seen as capable and responsible by parents -Positive influences -Successful -Psychologically healthy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grade point average -Demonstrated performance -Products -Achievement Testing -Interviews -Teacher/Peer/Parent self nominations -IQ tests -Creativity Testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advocate for child at school and in community -Provide opportunities related to passions -Allow friends of all ages -Remove time and space restrictions -Do family projects -Include child in parent's passion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Allow development of long-term integrated plan of study -Accelerated and enriched curriculum -Remove time and space restrictions -Compacted learning experiences with pretesting -In-depth studies -Mentorships -College & career counseling and opportunities -Dual enrollment or early admission -Waive traditional school policy and regulations

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