

Gifted 101

Parents often hear the phrase *gifted and talented* and wonder what that means for their children at home and at school.



DEFINITION

No single definitive definition of *gifted and talented* exists. However, most states and districts model theirs from the first federal definition established in 1972. Since then educators and researchers have continued to study gifted and talented children, and definitions have evolved. Several commonalities exist. Most definitions:

- Suggest that gifted and talented children have demonstrated abilities that are significantly advanced compared to other children of the same age, experience, and background.
- Indicate that children can be gifted and talented in any domain. They may have advanced abilities in math, music, or dance, for example.
- Indicate that some gifted and talented children have the potential to perform at remarkably high levels but might not yet be demonstrating it. Gifted and talented children need appropriate support and opportunities to develop their potential.

Your child's school will base its gifted and talented program on your district's and state's definition. That is an important place to start. In addition, policy and practice should follow the guidelines provided by NAGC's *Pre-K–Grade 12 Gifted Education Programming Standards* (Go to www.nagc.org).

One important point to remember: *Definition does not equal services.* Even though your school or district may define *gifted and talented*, it may or may not fund or implement programs for gifted children. There is no federal law or mandate for serving gifted and talented children, so it's up to each individual state to determine its own laws and policies. Each district bases its own policy and programming decisions to reflect state legislation and state board of education policy.

QUESTIONS PARENTS OFTEN ASK

How do I know my child is gifted?

- Consider the characteristics described in NAGC's *Common Characteristics of Gifted Individuals* (www.nagc.org). It's important to remember that few children demonstrate every characteristic on a list. Rather, they tend to have more of the characteristics than not.
- Children may be gifted in one or more domains. They may demonstrate advanced abilities in mathematics, for example, while performing like their same age peers in other subjects.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

» Find the definition for your state and your child's school.

Search: *Gifted by State* at www.nagc.org

» Know the characteristics typical of gifted and talented children.

Find: *Common Characteristics of Gifted Children* at www.nagc.org

» Learn more about acceleration as an appropriate service for gifted children.

Visit: www.accelerationinstitute.org

» Follow your child's lead on interests and exploration.

Browse: NAGC's *Gifted & Talented Resource Directory* (www.nagc.org) and *Hoagies' Gifted Education Page* (www.hoagiesgifted.org)

» Recognize your child's intensities, sensitivities, and social-emotional needs.

Go to: *Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)* at www.sengifted.org

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QUESTIONS PARENTS OFTEN ASK

How do I know my child is gifted? (continued)

- The characteristics that parents often notice first include advanced vocabulary, heightened sensitivity, remarkable memory, and rapid learning. Gifted and talented children are constantly learning from their environment, seeming to know things without the effort required to learn it.
- Schools and districts vary greatly in their identification processes. Some identify children for gifted and talented services in kindergarten. Others use informal processes for primary age children and begin formal identification in third or fourth grade. The data utilized in the identification processes are just as varied. Most schools and districts use standardized assessments as one component.
- Your child's identification as gifted is less important than his educational needs being served in school. The focus should be on figuring out your child's needs and providing for them, rather than attaining a label.

What should school look like for my child?

- Schools should offer a variety of services available that are specific to your child's strengths, readiness, interests, and abilities.
- Acceleration services allow your child to move ahead in the school's curriculum at a pace faster than his same age peers. This might be through early entrance to kindergarten, doing fifth grade math while in third grade, or skipping a grade. The research is clear: Acceleration can be very good for children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth.
- Enrichment services supplement learning within a grade level. This includes everything from completing more complex assignments to participating in competitions or clubs.
- Teachers should differentiate learning by pre-assessing what your child already knows, understands, or is able to do, then matching learning experiences to her needs. This might be different homework or assignments for different groups of students.
- Flexible grouping allows your child to work with appropriate peers. These may be peers by readiness, ability, ideas, or interests, not just age-mates.

How do I support my child at home?

- Collect resources on your child's topics of interests, such as books, videos, and websites. Make time to talk to your child every day and encourage her active questioning. Find peers or groups who share similar interests.
- It can be easy to forget your child is just a child because he may be able to have adult conversations about advanced topics. Allow your child the freedoms or responsibilities appropriate for his individual emotional or social development.
- Gifted children are often highly observant and sensitive to social issues and fairness. Model the behavior and respect of others you expect of your child. Find opportunities for him to participate in acts of service that can make a difference.
- Provide challenge outside of school. Enrichment is incredibly beneficial whether it supplements school content or explores interests or passions. This could be in any area, whether that be through music, sports, or academic camps.
- Encourage your child to take risks. Celebrate mistakes as learning opportunities. When you make mistakes, model positive ways to problem-solve and grow.



FOR MORE INFO

Inman, T. F., & Kirchner, J. (2016). *Parenting gifted children 101: An introduction to gifted kids and their needs*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

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Ricci, M. C. (2016). *Mindsets for parents: Strategies to encourage growth mindsets in kids*. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Van Gemert, L. (2017). *Perfectionism: A practical guide to managing "never good enough."* Tucson, AZ: Great Potential Press.

Webb, J. T., Gore, J. L., Amend, E. R., & DeVries, A. R. (2007). *A parents' guide to gifted children*. Tucson, AZ: Great Potential Press.



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