

*What are some dimensions in which young children may be gifted? This review of research explores the intellectual, social, and emotional qualities that are early indicators of children's advanced abilities.*

# Recognizing Giftedness: Defining High Ability in Young Children

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The word *gifted*, when used to describe children's intellectual abilities, evokes varied opinions in teachers, caregivers, and families of young children. Some attitudes are positive, others negative, while still others are built upon misconceptions about individuals who are gifted. The purpose of this article is to familiarize the reader with the characteristics of preschoolers who possess high ability. Children with advanced abilities have special needs that must be acknowledged and recognized. Educators are also urged to understand the emotional intensities of young children who are gifted.

Giftedness occurs in people from infancy through adulthood (Harrison, 2004). While gifted preschoolers are less frequently acknowledged within the gifted education research and literature, they can be described as those who show promise of performing at high levels because of their advanced or accelerated development (Clark, 2002; Harrison 2004; Morelock, Brown, & Morrissey, 2003; Smutny, 1998). The precocious development of very young children may occur in linguistic skills, motor skills, cognitive skills, academic aptitude, music and art, and personal or interpersonal skills, although it is not limited to these categories (Olszewski-Kubilius, Limburg-Weber, & Pfeiffer, 2003).

One of the first and most influential studies to determine the characteristics of young children who are gifted was the longitudinal study by Terman in 1925 of 1,528 children having an IQ of 135 or above. Terman (1925) was able to establish retrospectively that the exceptionally gifted children walked about one month earlier and developed language 3.5 months earlier than the moderately gifted children in the study. Approximately 50% of the gifted children in the study could

read before they entered school (Shurkin, 1992).

Since Terman's time, research has expanded in the direction of early development of giftedness, and a consensus has developed that giftedness in very young children has many dimensions beyond a simple measure of

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intelligence (Jackson, 2003; Harrison, 2004; Olszewski-Kubilius, Limburg-Weber, & Pfeiffer, 2003). Many types of giftedness, such as artistically gifted, require time for cultivation that preschoolers are generally too young to have experienced (Clark & Zimmerman, 2004; Winner, 1996).

Within the early childhood period, a child may not yet have had the opportunity or experience required to translate potential into performance. At such an early stage, giftedness may be determined by the “general ability factor,” rather than by specific talents (Tannenbaum, 1992). In other words, due to a lack of exposure or training in specific talent areas, high-ability preschoolers may be recognized by above-average or accelerated growth through the typical milestones of early childhood development.

For instance, preschoolers who are gifted often show early linguistic skills including verbal and reading ability, as well as early motor development and social-emotional maturity. This early development is seen as affecting the whole child, with the recognition that each precocious ability, particularly during early childhood, has significant impact on the other areas of development. Therefore, in addition to their strengths and developmental advances, there are many other emotional and personality characteristics that are shared among very young children who are gifted.

Children of all ages who are gifted are often characterized by asynchronous development. For example, at the age of 4 or 5, a child who carries on intelligent conversations with adults may not be able to tie his or her own shoes. Particularly for the preschool-aged child, the



**Subjects & Predicates**

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balance among the social-emotional, intellectual, and motor development is noticeably uneven (Perez, 1980; Roeper, 1977). The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states in its principles of developmentally appropriate practice that “development proceeds at varying rates from child to child as well as unevenly within different areas of each child’s functioning” (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997, p. 10).

With regard to the need to succeed, young children who are gifted

may be discouraged by their feelings and physical development. These children can often visualize and describe difficult motor skills such as climbing a jungle gym or building an intricate block structure but may try to find an excuse not to participate, avoiding the task until they know they can do it. On the other hand, they may exhibit great frustration in their attempts to perform the task if they are not successful. Thus, gifted children’s insistence on perfectionism may inhibit some types of risk-taking,



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particularly in areas where they feel they have less proficiency (Perez, 1980).

## Linguistic Developmental Strengths

Early development of exceptional verbal ability is often considered to be a characteristic of giftedness (Damiani, 1997; Gross, 1999; Klein, 1992; Roeper, 1977). One of the most common characteristics of the very young child who is gifted is early speech. The precocious emergence of language is important because it has significant impact on the other areas of development.

At age 2, an extensive vocabulary and agile use of language in a young child who is gifted will be remarkably evident. Therefore, various intelligence tests such as the Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scales of Intelligence-III (Wechsler, 2002) measure linguistic abilities as

a subtest or subscale. Precocious verbal ability is characterized by

- advanced vocabulary for age
- use of language in original and meaningful ways
- richness of expression, elaboration, and fluency (Eby & Smutny, 1991; Kitano, 1985; Perleth, Lehwald, & Browder, 1993)

In a study of exceptionally gifted children, Gross (1993) recorded linguistic precocity far beyond even that of the moderately gifted. The mean age at which 15 children in the study spoke their first word was 9.7 months with a standard deviation of 4.85 months. The children who were gifted were able to link words into meaning earlier and with greater degrees of complexity than were their age peers. Early and fluent speech was also linked to excellent memory. Children in the study could recite poetry, passages from books, and songs before the age of 2.

Most importantly, early speech enables young children who are gifted to express their ideas, seek information through questioning, and interact verbally with their parents and other family members at an age when other children are only beginning to experiment with oral communication. According to Abroms (1981), advanced language development is a social characteristic of the toddler who is gifted. She states "given the isomorphic relation between language and social cognition, language is a significant marker of underlying social development" (p. 6). While children's language skills affect their ability to establish social relationships with adults and other children, their skill in social interaction can either support or encumber their language development (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997).

## Emotional Sensitivity

One often-noted characteristic of young children who are gifted is their high level of emotional sensitivity, which allows for the early development of values, empathy, and responsibility (Clark, 2002). Young children who are gifted may demonstrate a strong concern for others and their feelings (Hafenstein & Tucker, 1995; Perez, 1980).

Their compassion is not limited to others; in fact, intellectually able children tend to display good self-concepts and social-emotional adjustment, more self-awareness, and self-reflection through their behaviors and comments (Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997; Jacobs, 1971; Kitano, 1990). However, this same sensitivity may also lead to intra- and interpersonal conflict (Kitano, 1990). Preschoolers who are gifted may struggle with feelings of being different, a need for recognition, and impatience with others.

**Each precocious ability has significant impact on other areas of development.**

A wide range of emotions comes into play for the young child who is gifted. A preschool child who is gifted not only has to "cope with the reality of the world but also with his/her own superior ability of understanding this reality in more depth than others" (Roeper, 1977, p. 389).

Preschoolers who are gifted show more than average sharing and helping behaviors, more reactions to others' signs of distress, more sensitivity to the needs and concerns of their peers, and more affection for others (Abroms & Gollin, 1980; Perez, Chassin, Ellington, & Smith, 1982). For example, a young child

who is gifted may act out in a way that is appropriate for his or her age, yet realizes the consequences of this type of behavior more than others of the same age. Because of the understanding that certain actions bring adverse consequences, the young child who is gifted may develop feelings of guilt that would not occur with an average child (Cohen, 1989; Silverman, 1998).

**Young children who are gifted are incredibly resourceful.**

Emotional intensity is a common personality characteristic of individuals who are gifted (Bouchard, 2004; Kitano, 1990; Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997). Children who are gifted have been described as "overexcitable, distractible, and even mistakenly thought to have an attention disorder" (Hartnett, Nelson, & Rinn, 2004; Tucker & Hafenstein, 1997; Winner 1996).

The term *overexcitability* should not be confused with *hyperactivity*. It is natural for young children who are gifted to feel deeply and to experience a broad range of emotions. In fact, emotional intensity fuels the motivation for achievement.

The Polish psychiatrist and psychologist Kazimierz Dabrowski developed the theory that sensitivity and emotional intensity is a part of the psychosocial makeup of gifted individuals and viewed these intensities as positive potentials for further growth (Piechowski, 1992). According to Dabrowski, developmental potential includes

- talents
- special abilities
- intelligence
- five forms of psychic overexcitability: psychomotor, sensu-

al, intellectual, imaginal, and emotional (Hafenstein & Tucker, 1995).

In Hafenstein and Tucker's (1995) case study of five young gifted children, ages 3 and 4, it was determined that all five subjects exhibited behaviors characteristic of Dabrowski's theory of psychic overexcitability. For example, the relationship aspect of emotional overexcitability allowed for development of values, empathy, and responsibility in the study's subjects.

Bouchard (2004) clarifies the term *overexcitabilities* (OE) not as abilities or intelligences, but as modes of experiencing the world. For example, a child with intellectual OE will do well on IQ tests, but these tests do not really measure the intensity of that child's *need to know*.

## Social Development

By age 3, children who are gifted are clearly social cognizers (Abroms & Gollin, 1980). Social cognition refers to the way children come to understand the thoughts, emotions, and viewpoints of others. Young children who are gifted in the area of social cognition may exhibit

- generosity,
- sharing of possessions,
- sympathy for others, and
- the desire to attend to other's needs at an early age.

Interactions with other children may also be a challenge for the intellectually able preschool child (Harrison, 2004; Rotigel, 2003). Young children who are gifted have an early awareness of their differences, and they may engage in social comparisons somewhat earlier than other children who are at the same chronological age but are considerably less advanced mentally (Abroms, 1981;



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Feldhusen, & Kolloff, 1979; Robinson, 1993).

The potential for developing the characteristics of perfectionism may stem from children's ability to judge themselves by the performance of peers in addition to their own expectations. It is also possible that this early recognition of differences may lead to regression in verbal and reading skills as young children who are gifted seek to mimic the behavior of their age peers (Gross, 1999).

For the most part, however, advanced social development leads to healthy patterns of play and interaction (Morelock, Brown, & Morrissey, 2003; Wright, 1990). Young children who are gifted are incredibly resourceful, and they are apt to apply their excellent memory for people and the functions they can perform to their social interactions (Abroms, 1981). Jacobs (1971) found that gifted kindergarteners have a greater awareness of the emotional interplay between the individual and the environment and greater sensitivity to the emotional pressures of the environment.

## Play Style

Play style is often a reflection of advanced social development in young children who are gifted. Through play, one can see a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). When a preschooler who is gifted chooses to play alone, his or her pursuits tend to be quite complex and goal directed (Wright, 1990).

In contrast to the stereotype of the gifted child who is bookish, introverted, and overly serious, young children who are gifted are often quite physically active in play and more socially advanced in play style (Morelock, Brown, & Morrissey, 2003; Wright, 1990). Compared to average preschoolers, girls and boys who are gifted tend to initiate play sessions with other children and to play more cooperatively (Barnett, & Fiscella, 1985; Lupkowski, 1989).

**Gifted young children are often more socially advanced in play style.**

During group play, the child who is gifted will often coordinate and integrate multiple complementary roles, taking into consideration the actions of other children. In this complex management of cooperative play, preschoolers who are gifted direct movement away from egocentric thought toward decentralized thought, which is a trait more typical of 6- and 7-year-olds (Wright, 1990).

Young children who are gifted tend to modify conventional activities and objects, using numerous creative, unique, and imaginative ways to render them more social (Barnett & Fiscella, 1985; Wright,



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1990). Their use of unconventional objects in play activities and diverse play interactions suggest that their need for environmental stimulation may be greater.

Perhaps when exposed to the same resource materials over a long period of time, preschoolers who are gifted become bored and seek new avenues for play. Barnett and Fiscella (1985) found that when the same objects were available in a preschool classroom to both gifted and nongifted children, the gifted children tended to use materials in novel ways and modify the play interactions with their peers.

Because of their high verbal abilities, preschoolers who are gifted are able to convey their ideas more easily to their peers, to communicate their feelings, and to give directions (Perez, et al., 1982). While Wright (1990) also found that preschoolers who are gifted have a preference for

associative play, in their cooperative play groups, gifted preschoolers most often orchestrated dramatic episodes, characterized by rich and complex themes. Given these budding leadership qualities, it is not surprising that young children who are gifted are often sought out by peers for companionship, ideas, and decisions (Kitano, 1982).

The advanced cognitive development of young children who are gifted is also linked to a mature sense of humor for their age (Barnett & Fiscella, 1985; Eby & Smutny, 1991; Gross, 1993; Perez, 1980). Perez (1980) conducted an informal study of young gifted children's response to humor. She found they were more likely to respond to riddles and verbal associations rather than the visual humor, which is usually found in books for young children. This more mature sense of humor may contribute to isolation

from age-level peers. Perez states that adults may also react negatively to a young child's sharp and incisive sense of humor.

## Fears

The domains of children's development (i.e. physical, social, emotional, and cognitive skills) are closely related and influenced by each other (Clark, 2002; Cohen, 1989). For example, increased mobility in babies and toddlers allows them to explore their world, and this expansion also affects their cognitive development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997).

Young children who are gifted internalize a great deal of input from their environments, and they are more sensitive to problems than their age-mates (Perez, 1980). In fact, adults often underestimate their sensitivity to the concerns of the adult world. Parents are not likely to discuss issues such as death, divorce, financial problems, and violence with their very young child. Yet it is likely that the child is aware of these concerns and may, because of an incomplete or false understanding of the situation, fall victim to doubts, fears, and guilt feelings (Feldhusen & Kolloff, 1979).

Roeper (1977) states "one of the differences between the gifted and the average child is that the gifted child loses innocence earlier" (p. 391). Because of his or her cognitive development, the preschooler who is gifted may have a deeper understanding of situations and consequences but may lack coping skills due to limited life experiences (Roeper, 1977; Tannenbaum, 1992).

Young children who are gifted may experience feelings of helplessness when they perceive a threat

because of their lack of knowledge of available support. These feelings may escalate to the point that children worry they will be subjected to unpredictable forces that are beyond their control. Knowing their own vulnerability and inability to control, solve, or withstand problems such as war, death, and disaster, some gifted children may develop severe and overwhelming fears.

**Curiosity is a common characteristic of young children who are gifted.**

On the other hand, many children who are gifted are characterized by having a unique coping mechanism (Cohen, 1989; Perez, 1980). Because of these strong feelings of danger in the world, they may develop a highly specialized area of interest in the cause of disasters, such as the tectonic movements of earthquakes or the flight safety equipment on various aircrafts, in an effort to overcome those fears. These early interests in special areas and themes often noted in young children who are gifted can be seen as an extension of control behaviors (Cohen, 1989).

Curiosity is a common characteristic of young children who are gifted (Clark, 2002; Jackson, 2003; Smutny 1998; Winner, 1996) and it is often noted that they pursue interests in meaningful and profound ways. Children who are gifted typically integrate large amounts of acquired information into their knowledge base. On the basis of their knowledge, they are able to critically analyze consequences and make decisions about how to further pursue their interests. Even at an

early age, the curiosity and pursuit of interests by children who are gifted is marked by a clear goal orientation (Perleth, Lehwald, & Browder, 1993).

## Cognitive and Achievement-Related Skills

When young children who are gifted are tested using standardized intelligence tests, they may have extraordinarily high performance in some areas but not necessarily in all cognitive ability areas (Fagan, 1984). At a very early age, infants have a tendency to spend more time focusing visually on some objects more so than others. Fagan (1984) states infants pay more attention to novel objects than those previously viewed. When Fagan studied children at 7 months and then again at 3 years and 5 years, he found that early novelty preferences were highly related to later intelligence.

The ability to form analogies at a very young age and to justify those responses may be another indicator of giftedness (Caropreso & White, 1994). Analogies are a type of reasoning ability that represents a novel or non-entrenched task. Using Sternberg's triarchic theory of intellectual giftedness, Caropreso and White (1994) explain that non-entrenched tasks are those that require processing types of information that are outside of an individual's familiar experiences. In their study of 108 four-, 5-, and 6-year-olds, Caropreso and White found the subset of 55 gifted students demonstrated higher levels of analogical reasoning than the nonidentified children based on their scores on the Test of Analogical Reasoning in Children (TARC).

**Table 1. Characteristics of Preschool Gifted Children**

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Classroom Examples</b>
Verbal skills including advanced vocabulary for age and use of language in original and meaningful ways	Early speech enables young gifted children to express their ideas, seek information through questioning, and interact verbally with their parents and family members at an age when other children are only beginning to experiment with oral communication.	"When I saw the ocean, it was waving at me."
Asynchronous development	The balance among social-emotional, intellectual, and motor development is usually uneven.	Giovanni refuses to draw a picture of himself when he is asked. He explains that his leg is rounded and long and he doesn't know how to put that on paper.
Emotional sensitivity	Young gifted children may demonstrate a strong concern for others and their feelings. This allows for early development of values, empathy, and responsibility.	Terrence asks his teacher, "Why does everybody lie to me? I don't lie to them."
Early awareness of difference	The potential for developing the characteristics of perfectionism may stem from gifted children's ability to judge themselves by the performance of peers in addition to their own expectations.	Carrie, a kindergartener, knows her times tables and can perform multiplication but refuses to count by five out loud in front of the class. Her teacher decides to read to the class <i>Regina's Big Mistake</i> by Marissa Moss.
Cooperative play style	Gifted preschoolers will often initiate play sessions, coordinate, and integrate multiple complementary roles, taking into consideration the actions of other children.	Sandra asks Maria, Sherry, and Emily to join her at the play house to make supper and set the table. She assigns Maria and Sherry the roles of older and younger sister and asks Emily whether she would like to be the mommy or the daddy.
Use of unconventional objects in play	Gifted young children appear to have an increased need for environmental stimulation.	Jean-Claude brings a piece of tree bark in from the playground to use as an iron.
Leadership	Gifted children are frequently sought out by peers for companionship, ideas, and decisions. They interact easily with peers.	The entire class realizes that Dante has learned to tie his shoes so they all request his assistance in tying theirs.
Mature sense of humor	Gifted preschoolers may respond to riddles and verbal associations rather than the visual humor that is usually found in age-level children's books.	Every time that 20-month-old Sophie hears her mother tell her to "eat it," Sophie giggles and repeats "eat it, Edith is coming over!"
Sensitivity to problems	Because of an incomplete or false understanding of a situation, gifted children may fall victim to feelings of doubt, fear, and guilt.	After temporarily missing one caregiver during a hurricane, Nathan expresses great concern over the skill of cooking from a recipe book. He is afraid that if he doesn't learn to read he will have to eat roaches.
Curiosity	Gifted children may integrate large amounts of information into their knowledge base, and interests are marked by a clear goal orientation.	On the first day that her teacher introduces the unit on ocean animals, Juanita shares with the class her knowledge of tiger sharks. While other animals are introduced, Juanita continues to mention facts about the tiger shark. She asks her teacher to find more information about the feeding pattern of tiger sharks.
Cognitive skills	They show evidence of reasoning, prelogical thinking, creativity, and spontaneous incorporation of academic activities into free play.	Hannah invents a game using the dry measuring cups and the liquid measuring cups. She tries to get her classmates to help her guess "how many of these will go into that."
Metacognitive control	Young children who are gifted are economical and efficient in developing strategies to solve problems.	At nap time, Lee asks the teacher to play some music. He explains "I can't go to sleep because my brain won't stop."
Academic achievement	They are able to remember complex information and to decode other symbolic systems such as maps and written language.	After learning about body systems, Meaghan defines a system as "lots of little parts working together," and then later refers to a colony of termites as a system.
Precocious reading	Rapid text-reading speed (both oral and silent) may be preferred because it facilitates comprehension.	When asked to read aloud a text containing controlled vocabulary, Eli races through, and makes substitutions such as "beetle" for "bug."

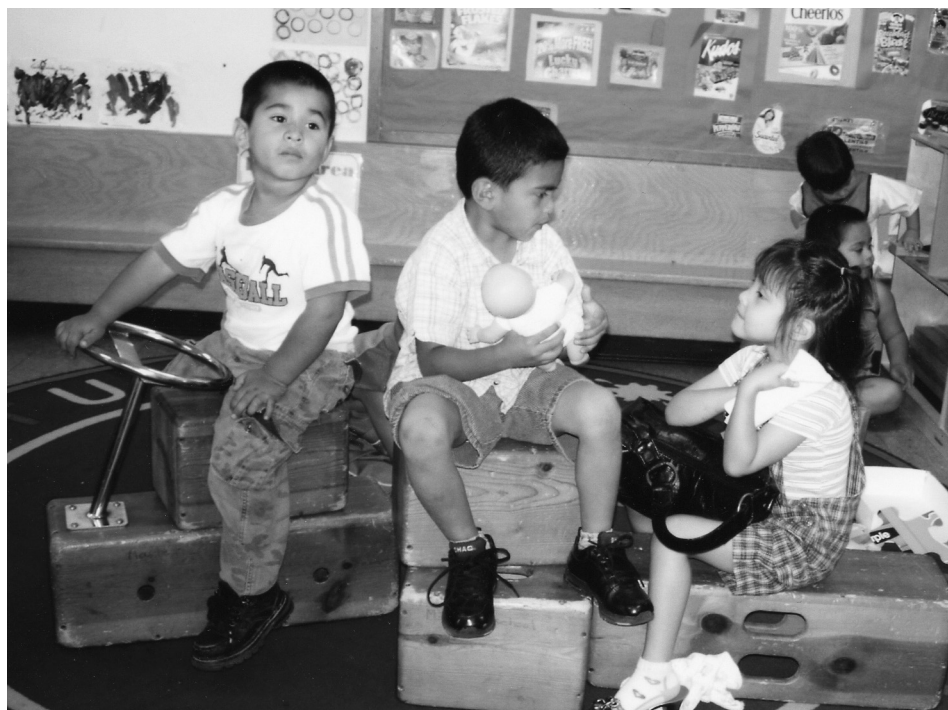
Adapted from Barnett & Fiscella (1985); Caropreso & White (1994); Eby & Smutny (1991); Feldhusen & Kolloff (1979); Hafenstein & Tucker (1995); Jackson (1992); Kitano (1982); Perez (1980); Robinson (1987), and Robinson (1993).

Several cognitive and achievement-related behaviors are prominent in preschool-aged children who are gifted. Kitano (1985) found that in addition to demonstrating high levels of accumulated knowledge and thinking abilities, preschool gifted children also showed evidence of prelogical thinking, discomfort with ambiguity, creativity, and spontaneous incorporation of academic activities into free play. Perhaps as a reflection of the gifted child's greater language fluency, preschoolers who are gifted also talk about problems, rules, and goals to a greater extent than do their average ability peers (Moss, 1992).

### Abilities unfold unevenly.

Metacognitive strategies such as trial and error, checking and comparing different possibilities, or reflecting on problem-solving processes (Perleth, Lehwald, & Browder, 1993) are often well defined in young children who are gifted. Moss (1992) reports findings that children who are gifted more frequently reality test and monitor their own activities.

Studies investigating strategy use and metacognition in preschool children most likely involve interaction with a parent or other adult (Kanevsky, 1992; Moss, 1990, 1992). For example, in Kanevsky's (1992) study, 4- and 5-year-old children were given puzzles to solve in the presence of a supportive tutor who was available both to answer questions and to offer help. The young children who were intellectually gifted were more able to evaluate their own need for assistance. They asked for help and denied



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assistance when they felt that they could solve a step in the puzzle on their own, whereas the average 4- and 5-year-olds seldom denied help and generally accepted the tutor's offer to help.

Kanevsky (1992) found that young children who are gifted were more like older children who are gifted in their engagement, independence, and self-monitoring. Furthermore, the young gifted children were more economical and efficient in their strategy development. According to Kanevsky, their efficiency points to differences in metacognition, which explain individual differences in memory, learning, and problem-solving abilities.

### Academic Achievement

Although several academic disciplines require a good amount of time and persistent training to build a knowledge base, as is the case with

numerical and mathematical expertise, young children who are gifted often show promise in certain academic behaviors (Perleth, Lehwald, & Browder, 1993; Tannenbaum, 1992). Even as infants, children who are gifted showed significantly greater goal directness, longer attention spans, and more responsiveness in testing situations (Damiani, 1997).

Pletan, Robinson, Berninger, and Abbott (1995) found that kindergarten-age children who showed signs of mathematical precocity, indeed, had more complex reasoning skills and memory skills such as verbal reasoning skills, ability to remember complex information, and to decode other symbolic systems such as maps and written language.

Precocious readers also excelled in text-reading speed (both oral and silent), phonetic analysis to identify nonsense words, and spelling of dictated words (Burns, Collins, & Paulsell, 1991; Jackson, 1992). It



has been noted that precocious readers' preference for rapid reading facilitates comprehension. Perhaps precocious readers have learned that plunging through the text at the most rapid pace is the best way to absorb and enjoy its contents (Jackson, 1992).

## Summary

Many characteristics are used to describe the young child who is gifted (see Table 1). However, it is important to remember that a child is a total entity. A preschool-aged child who is gifted may present just a few of these traits or perhaps a combination of many characteristics. Many strengths of the young child who is gifted significantly impact other areas of development. The domains of very young children's developmental skills are closely related and influenced by each other. It is most likely that their abilities will unfold unevenly.

Each child develops in a unique way and different areas of each child's functioning may appear at varied stages. Within early childhood, a variety of opportunities and experiences may be required in order to translate potential into performance.

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Early childhood professionals who are interested in becoming SECA volunteer manuscript reviewers are encouraged to complete the Reviewer Application at [SouthernEarlyChildhood.org](http://SouthernEarlyChildhood.org).

# Put These Ideas Into Practice!

## Recognizing Giftedness: Defining High Ability in Young Children

by Jesse R. Cukierkorn, Frances A. Karnes, Sandra J. Manning,  
Heather Houston, and Kevin Besnoy

### Recognizing—

#### Cognitive Characteristics

- Alertness in infancy
- Faster pace in reaching motor development milestones
- Early language development
  - Advanced vocabulary
  - Complex speech patterns
- Interest in the alphabet and symbols
- Intense curiosity
- Sustained attention
- Abstract thinker
- Ability to transfer knowledge
- Generates original ideas
- Creative/imaginative
- Excellent memory
- May be an early reader

### Understanding—

#### Social/Emotional Characteristics

- Early empathy development
- Emotional intensity/sensitivity
- Frustration with own limitations
- Concern with truth and fair play
- Early awareness of difference
- Mature sense of humor
- Perfectionism
- Leader in cooperative play



### Serving—

#### Ideas for Families and Teachers of Gifted Children

- Create balance between academic and play activities
- Involve children in decisions about what to learn
- Integrate learning from a wide range of fields
- Remember that social development is important: children need intellectual peers in addition to age peers
- Encourage children to explore the world through drama, art, and movement
- Teach processes such as brainstorming and thinking aloud
- View children as separate from their gifts
- Build on prior knowledge and scaffold new experiences based on children's comments and current understandings of their world
- Provide centers or learning spaces in the classroom and home
  - Writing and art
  - Science
  - Math
  - Technology
  - Reading
  - Drama and dance

### A word about asynchronous development

Intellectual, social-emotional, and motor development often proceed unevenly in young children. This pattern is especially evident in gifted children. For example, a gifted preschooler might have a remarkable vocabulary and ability to engage in conversation, but motor skills may be developing normally. Children may display gifted characteristics in one area and not in another.

### Definition of Giftedness

Potentially gifted preschoolers are those who show promise of performing at high levels due to their advanced or accelerated development (B. Clark, *Growing Up Gifted*, 2002). The federal government defines "gifted and talented" students, children, or youth as those

"who give evidence of high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific academic fields, and who need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop those capabilities." [No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110 (Title IX, Part A, Definitions (22) (2002); 20 U.S.C. Sec. 7802 (22) (2004)].

### For More Information on the Web

[http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/young\\_children.htm](http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/young_children.htm). While this page focuses almost entirely on preschoolers—parenting, teaching, and emotional-social issues—the rest of the site provides information on all aspects of giftedness. Hoagies contains links to articles, books, Web pages, and much more.

<http://www.nationdeceived.org/> Fifty years of study involving acceleration proves that this often-overlooked resource for gifted children is a viable option. Parents interested in acceleration will find research-based support for their advocacy efforts. This report includes information about entering school early and skipping elementary grades.

Note: *Dimensions of Early Childhood* readers are encouraged to copy this material for early childhood students as well as teachers of young children as a professional development tool.