

# Basic Facts About the Gifted and Academically Talented

## Is Your Child Gifted?

Every child is different. Each has different strengths and abilities. Today some experts believe that every child is gifted. They say every child has unique strengths. But, when we speak of academically gifted and talented, we mean children whose exceptional talents and abilities set them well apart from others their age.

Parents usually notice special talents at home. The child learns to talk or read very early. Gifted children are very curious and demand a lot of attention.

Schools use tests to identify the gifted and talented. They have trained specialists evaluate children. Using set standards, schools can identify children with exceptional abilities.

## Myths and Facts About Gifted and Talented Children?

Myth #1: Gifted children are good students.

Fact: Some are, but some may earn low grades. Gifted children need to learn the importance of hard work and effort. Having ability is not the same as using it.

Myth #2: Gifted children may have strong academic skills, but they don't get along well with other children.

Fact: Not true. Most gifted students are also socially skilled. Gifted children do, however, enjoy spending time, in class or out, with other academically able students.

Myth #3: Gifted children should be straight A students.

Fact: No. There are many ways to be gifted. A child talented in math, for example, may not be equally talented in reading. Parents and schools should not set overly high expectations.

The gifted and talented, like all children, want to please. They, too, become discouraged and feel like failures if they cannot live up to expectations.

Myth #4: Gifted children will do fine without any special attention.

Fact: Wrong. Gifted children do need special attention. They are demanding at home and at school. Their interests can be intense. They ask many questions. They can be impatient.

They can be quick to question authority. They are often messy. It's important to know how to deal with these problems. All children deserve appropriate help to make the most of their talents.

## Coping With a Gifted Child

- Give your child every chance to nurture his/her gifts. The school will do what it can, but your child will also need stimulating activities outside of school. These are not

always expensive. They will require some of your time. Your child's teacher or school counselor may be able to suggest good activities.

- Gifted children tend to be very competitive. Encourage your child to do some things just for fun.
- Don't forget that gifted children are still children. They may be advanced academically, but have normal emotional growth. Don't expect adult judgment or maturity just because the child has some adult abilities.
- Don't let a gifted child consume most of the family's time and attention. Other children need attention, too. Parents also need to take care of their own emotional needs.
- Accept that your child may not develop his talents the same way you might. Set reasonable expectations. Provide support. Don't insist that he/she study or practice your way. That's a struggle you are almost certain to lose.

### **Should Your Child Move Ahead?**

Should a gifted child be advanced in school? It depends upon the student. Most who are moved ahead in school do not suffer academically. In fact, they may be more interested in school. However, acceleration is usually not good for students who are physically or emotionally immature. Another point that should be considered is willingness from the child to advance. He/She should not be pushed into the process by adults. Teachers and administrators should approve. It is often better to advance students in just one or two subject areas.