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# Profiles of the Gifted and Talented

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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 any one 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 any one 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 selfconcepts 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 lifelong learning. They are well adjusted to society but are not well prepared for the ever-changing challenges of life.

#### TYPE II

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 in-servicing 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 nongifted 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.

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# TYPE II: Challenging

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	SCHOOL SUPPORT	Accelerated and enriched curriculum     Time for personal interests     Compacted learning experiences (pre-testing)     Opportunities to be with intellectual peers     Development of independent learning skills     In-depth studies     Mentorships     College & career counseling	Tolerance Placement with appropriate teacher Cognitive & social skill development Direct and clear communication with child Give permission for feelings Studies in-depth Mentorships Bulld self-esteem Behavioral contracting	Recognize & properly place     Give permission to take time out from G/T classes     Provide some sex role models     Continue to give college & career information
	HOME SUPPORT	Independence     Ownership     Freedom to make choices     Time for personal interests     Risk taking experiences	Acceptance and understanding     Allow them to pursue interest     Advocate for them at school     Modeling appropriate behavior     Family projects	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
& TALENTED	IDENTIFICATION	Crade point average Achievement Test IQ Tests  Teacher nominations	Peer Recommendations     Parent nomination     Interviews     Performance     Recommendation from a significant, non-related adult     Creativity Testing     Teacher advocate	Giffed peer nomination     Home nomination     Community nomination     Achievement testing     IQ Tests     Performance     Teacher advocate
PROFILES OF THE GIFTED & TALENTED	ADULTS & PEERS PERCEPTIONS OF TYPE	Loved by teachers     Admired by peers     Loved & accepted by parents	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	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
PROFIL	NEEDS	To see deficiencies  To be challenged  To take risks  Assertiveness skills  Autonomy  Help with boredom  Appropriate curriculum	• To be connected with others • To learn tact, flexibility, self-awareness, self control, acceptance • Support for creativity • Contractual systems	Freedom to make choices     To be aware of conflicts     Awareness of feelings     Support for abilities     Involvement with gifted peers     Career/college info.     Self-acceptance
	BEHAVIORS	Perfectionist High Achiever Seeks teacher approval and structure Non-risk taking Does well academically Accepts & conforms Dependent	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	Denies talent     Drops out of G/T and advanced classes     Resists challenges     Wants to belong socially     Changes friends
Figure 1	FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES	Boredom Dependent Dependent Positive self-concept Anxious Guilty about failure Extinsic motivation Responsible for others Diminish feelings of self and rights to their emotion Self critical	Boredom Frustration Low self-esteem Impatient Defensive Heightened sensitivity Uncertain about social roles	Unsure     Pressured     Confused     Guilty     Insecure     Diminished feelings of self     and rights to their emotions

PROFILES OF THE GIFTED & TALENTED (continued)

FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES	BEHAVIORS	NEEDS	ADULTS & PEERS PERCEPTIONS OF TYPE	IDENTIFICATION	HOME SUPPORT	SCHOOL SUPPORT
Resentment     Angry     Dropouss     Explosive     Poor self-concept     Defensive     Defensive     Burn-out	Has intermittent attendance Doesn't complete tasks Pursues outside interests "Spaced out" in class Is self abusive Is oreative Criticizes self & others Does inconsistent work Is disruptive, acts out Seems average or below Is defensive Is defensive	An individualized program     Intense Support     Alternatives (separate, new opportunities)     Counseling (individual, group, and family)     Remedial help with skills	Adults are angry with them     Peers are judgmental     Seen as loners, dropouts, dopers, or air heads     Reject them and ridicule     Seen as dangerous and rebellious	Review cumulative folder     Interview earlier teachers     Descrepancy between IQ and demonstrated achievement     Incongruities and inconsistencies in performance     Creativity testing     Gifted peer     recommendation     Demonstrated performance in non-school areas	Seek counseling for family	Diagnostic testing     Group counseling for young students     Nontraditional study skills     In-depth studies     Mentorships     Alternative out of classroom learning experiences     G.E.D.
Powerless     Frustrated     Low self-esteem     Unaware     Angry	Demonstrates inconsistent work     Seems average or below     May be disruptive or acts out	Emphasis on strengths Coping skills G/T support group Counseling Skill development	<ul> <li>Seen as "weird"</li> <li>Seen as "dumb"</li> <li>Viewed as helpless</li> <li>Avoided by peers</li> <li>Seen as average or below in ability</li> <li>Perceived to require a great deal of imposed structure</li> <li>Seen only for the disability</li> </ul>	Scatter of 11 points or more on WISC or WAIS Recommendation of significant others Recommendation from informed special ed. teacher Interview Performance Teacher Advocate	Recognize gifted abilities Challenge them Provide risk-taking opportunities Advocate for child at school Do family projects Seek counseling for family	Placement in gifted program     Provide needed resources     Provide alternative learning experiences     Begin investigations and explorations     Cive time to be with peers     Give time to be with a
• Self confident • Self accepting • Enthusiastic • Accepted by others • Supported • Desire to know & learn • Accepts failure • Intrinsic motivation • Personal power • Accepts others	Has appropriate social skills     Works independently     Develops own goals     Follows through     Works without approval     Follows strong areas of passion     Is creative     Stands up for convictions     Takes risks	Advocacy Feedback Facilitation Support for risks Appropriate opportunities	Accepted by peers and adults     Admired for abilities     Seen as capable and responsible by parents     Positive influences     Successful     Psychologically healthy	Grade point average Demonstrated performance Products Achievement Testing Interviews Teacher/Peer/Parent self nominations IQ tests Creativity Testing	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	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 policies and regulations

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# 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.

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