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The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

Information Sheet

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIFTED CHILDREN

Often the earliest identification of gifted children takes place by simple observation of the child's behaviour by an educational professional, a parent or friend. Far from undermined by being subjective, identification by characteristic traits is generally accurate, and is less intrusive or conspicuous than other methods. It also readily allows types of giftedness to be detected, and is often valuably used with young children. Nonetheless subjective elements are certainly involved particularly in comparisons with other children of the same age.

The following lists were adapted from one compiled from various sources by Cromer Primary School and have been used with their permission. Note it is not expected that any gifted child will show all the traits listed in any section.

Characteristic traits are listed by broad category of giftedness. These are:

1. general intellectual ability
2. specific academic aptitude
3. creative thinking and production
4. leadership
5. psychomotor ability
6. visual and performing arts

General intellectual ability

- is an avid reader
- has avid interest in science or literature
- provides very alert, rapid answers to questions
- has a wide range of interests
- is secure emotionally
- is venturesome, wanting to do new things
- tends to dominate peers or situations
- is an entrepreneur - readily makes money on various projects or activities
- needs little outside control - applies self discipline
- is resourceful - solving problems by ingenious methods
- is creative in new ideas, seeing associations, pursuing innovations
- displays a great curiosity about objects, situations or events
- has the capacity to look into things and be puzzled
- is involved with many exploratory type activities
- reveals originality in oral and written expression
- is perceptually open to his or her environment
- displays a willingness to accept complexity
- has the capacity to use knowledge and information other than to memorise
- shows superior judgement in evaluating things
- is a good guesser
- makes good grades in most subjects
- learns rapidly, easily and efficiently
- uses a lot of commonsense

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- retains and uses information which has been heard or read
- uses a large number of words easily and accurately
- asks many questions of a provocative nature
- has a power of abstraction, conceptualisation and synthesis
- has an interest in cause-effect relations
- has a liking for structure, order and consistency
- has a power of concentration, an intense attention that excludes all else
- is persistent
- has a high energy level
- is independent
- is friendly and outgoing

Specific academic aptitude

- shows similar characteristics to general intellectual ability but concentrated around one or a few fields
- has a long attention span in areas of interest
- learns rapidly, easily and with less repetition in one or a few specific areas (probably not all subject areas)
- likes or loves one or a few areas of knowledge
- likes to study some subjects more than others
- spends time voluntarily beyond ordinary assignments on projects of interest to him or her
- is able to extend learning from these key areas to various situations somewhat unrelated in orientation
- is able to show broad perspective on one or more subject areas
- is able to judge own and others' relative abilities in key areas of interest
- seeks assistance of others beyond his or age peers in extending knowledge in areas of interest

Creative thinking

- is fluent in producing and elaborating on ideas
- makes unusual associations between remote ideas
- is flexible in thinking patterns
- senses when problems exist
- acts spontaneously, intuitively
- tolerates ambiguity and uncertainty
- senses inconsistencies and discontinuities
- readily guesses and makes hypotheses
- juggles or redefines elements of a problem or task
- can show intense concentration on a task
- retains own ideas in a discussion or collaboration
- provides multiple solutions or responses to problems
- is uninhibited in expression, sometimes radical
- is intellectually playful, interested in fantasy, imagination
- always trying to adapt or improve things
- has a keen sense of humour, seeing humour in situations others don't

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- doesn't mind being different
- doesn't accept authoritarian pronouncements without own judgement
- asks provocative questions, challenges parents, teachers, written and other authorities
- is bored with memorisation and recitation
- displays energy, sometimes disruptively
- produces unexpected, sometimes "silly" responses
- is considered, and perhaps resented, by some peers as "crazy"
- can show unusual degrees of originality, concentration and persistent hard work on projects that capture their interest and imagination

Leadership

- can stimulate and arouse others
- organises others
- recognises skills and abilities possessed by others
- interacts with others easily showing social skills
- recognises and can articulate the goals of a group
- can articulate ideas clearly
- can listen to others empathetically
- understands how people feel and how groups function
- can give directions clearly and effectively
- exercises authority reliably and responsibly
- can adopt non-leadership roles within a group
- can establish the mood of a group
- supports others in a group when appropriate
- can coordinate the work of several individuals
- is often asked for ideas and suggestions
- is looked to by others when something must be decided

Psychomotor ability

- is rhythmic
- is athletic
- likes to play physically
- has a suitable body build
- is coordinated, balanced and confident in physical activities
- is inventive in constructing or modifying games
- is energetic
- is able to understand the intellectual aspects of psychomotor activities
- demonstrates endurance, stamina and persistence in physical activities
- demonstrates prowess in physical activities common amongst age peers

Visual and performing arts

Music

- has good sense of rhythm
- is well-coordinated

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- discriminates musical and other sounds well
- understands musical relationships
- enjoys musical activities and demonstrates musical feeling
- shows tonal memory
- responds readily to rhythm, melody and harmony
- uses music to express feeling or experience
- makes up original tunes
- enjoys dance and dramatic activities with musical elements

Drama

- demonstrates interest and enjoyment in dramatic activities
- readily shifts into role of another character, animal or object
- uses voice to reflect changes in mood
- demonstrates understanding of conflict when acting out a dramatic event
- communicates feelings by means of facial expressions, gestures and bodily movements
- enjoys evoking emotional responses from listeners
- demonstrates ability to dramatise feelings and experiences
- brings a dramatic situation to a climax with a well-timed ending when telling a story

Art

- draws a variety of objects
- puts depth into drawing, showing planning and good proportion
- treats art seriously and enjoys it
- shows originality in modes of undertaking art
- is willing to try out new materials and experiences
- pursues art in spare time
- uses art to express feelings and experiences
- is interested in other people's art, both appreciating it and criticising it
- likes to model three dimensionally with clay, soap carving, plasticine, etc.

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