

4. Some characteristics of children who are gifted and who also have learning difficulties

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If a child shows the majority of the following characteristics often or always, further assessment would probably be a good idea. As a parent, you might take this opportunity to speak to the teacher, and/or the school counsellor, or any other source who will give you satisfactory information and action.

Reference to the chart that follows next week might be helpful in noticing how some of these behaviours can be viewed negatively.

Intellectual strengths

The person who is Gifted/LD could have:

- expertise in at least one specific area such as music, art, or mechanics
- an active imagination
- an extensive vocabulary
- exceptional comprehension
- skill at tasks requiring abstract thinking and problem-solving
- excellent visual memory
- capability at puzzles and mazes
- an exceptional ability in geometry and science
- a sophisticated sense of humour
- a deep commitment to and can be highly creative in activities outside of school
- ability to grasp concepts all at once, rather than step by step

Student who are Gifted/LD are often not marks grubbers, but knowledge seekers.

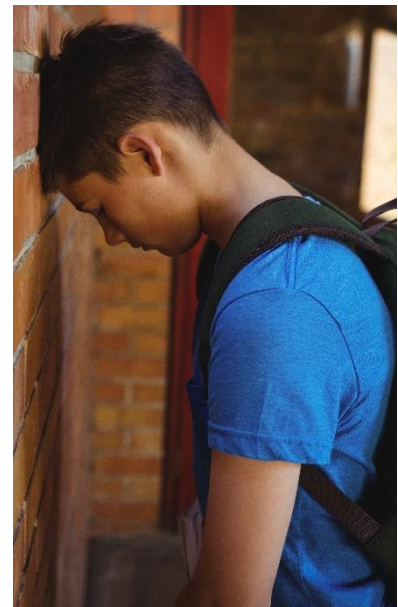
- Corinne Bees

Possible academic difficulties

- written output problems: poor handwriting, slow at writing which often turns into writer's block
- spells poorly
- difficulty with phonics
- cannot do simple tasks but can complete more sophisticated activities
- difficulty with computation but demonstrates a high-level mathematical reasoning
- does well in math but poorly in language arts
- does not do well under pressure (e.g., on timed tasks)
- has problems completing tasks that comprise a sequence of steps, but can take part in discussions that examine issues from a broad perspective
- has difficulty with rote memorization
- appears inattentive

Possible emotional signs

- generalises minor academic failures to feelings of overall inadequacy
- has unrealistically high or low self-expectations
- feels academically inept
- is confused about his or her abilities
- has strong anxiety or fear of failure in academic tasks
- is sensitive to criticism of his or her own work, even constructive criticism
- experiences intense frustration
- has low self-esteem
- reports feeling differently from others
- often has poor social skills with peers (but can get along with adults)



Possible behaviour difficulties

- may be disruptive in class
- may often be off-task
- may be disorganised
- may be especially unmotivated
- may act out without thinking about the consequences
- may make creative excuses to avoid some tasks
- may be aggressive
- may be withdrawn.

References:

Corinne Bees, recently retired, was a special education teacher who designed and taught a program called the "GOLD" Program. The program, at Prince of Wales Secondary School in Vancouver, B.C., is for students who are Gifted with Learning Difficulties (Gifted/LD).

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