

Characteristics of High Ability and Possible Associated Classroom Behaviors

Burney, V. & Speirs Neumeister, K. (2006). *Guiding Students with High Abilities: Social and Emotional Considerations*. Indiana Department of Education, Indianapolis, IN.

Characteristic	Possibly Problematic Classroom Behavior
Early reading and/or quick mastery of reading	May be impatient with reading instruction, resist doing worksheets, and insist on reading own material which may be years above grade level.
Learns new things quickly and easily	May exhibit boredom and frustration when others do not catch on as quickly, not being allowed to move on or do something else. May be frustrated with group work when others are not as capable.
Has extensive vocabulary, background knowledge in a particular area, or memory of detail	May dominate discussions and refuse to listen to others' contributions. May argue in a sophisticated way.
Grasps math concepts quickly; solves problems involving critical thinking; is intuitive; enjoys logic and puzzles	May resist doing repetitive computation drill needed by others. May correctly or incorrectly jump to an answer without careful attention to detail. May make careless errors, have trouble with legibility of writing, refuse to do homework, and incorrectly assume all will be as easy as the first examples. May work problems in unconventional ways.
Interested in some things in depth. Grasps Big Picture, concepts, and forms connections.	May work hard in a new area of interest or just one subject, allowing other areas to suffer. May be impatient with others who do not see how things are connected and with material not at the right level of complexity.
Has a more intense energy level, activity level, or ability to concentrate; talks fast	May seek active inquiry or be so completely involved with a task that he/she becomes frustrated with having to change tasks. Could seem overactive, stubborn or uncooperative with poor self-regulation.
Extremely sensitive and/or introverted	May cry easily, prefer to work alone, may not readily participate orally, may (incorrectly) appear to be immature in social development. May be upset by student cruelty to others or to teacher becoming upset with the class. May be overly sensitive to others' remarks, but also be able to deliver stinging criticism.
Thinks differently; is creative	May appear different and/or rebellious or may experience social isolation. May be a day dreamer. May ask tangential questions and seem off track. May question authority.
Great sense of humor	May be the class clown or use humor sarcastically.
Curious, observant	May be off task and have difficulty disengaging to change activities.
Perfectionistic	May set unrealistic standards for self and others, be overly concerned with details, be rigid in work routines. May find true-false or multiple choice questions frustrating in their lack of precision; may be argumentative and correct every small error made by others.
Displays interest in complex games, fantasy, non-fiction	May prefer to play with older children or adults. (May also prefer to play with younger children whom he/she can organize into activities.) May become involved in fantasy worlds or science fiction.
Likes to observe before participating	May have difficulty with change and become anxious with new situations. Likes to be in control and know all the rules or details of the assignments. May be uncomfortable with open-ended assignments and ambiguity.
Sensitive to environment	May object to loud noises, bright lights, odors, or have many allergies.
Demonstrates leadership potential	May be considered bossy and unable to accept input or share control of ideas
May have different friends in different activities or venues	May have positive relationships but lack a "best" friend for all areas; may consider him/herself unpopular as a result of not being in one "in" crowd.