

Who Are the Gifted? A Global Overview

American educators have struggled for more than thirty years to define what is meant by giftedness. In 1972 the Marland Report was issued by the United States Office of Education. This report concluded that gifted and talented children are those *who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance*. From this report came the Federal law (P.L. 91-230) which defines gifted and talented children in five categories:

1. General Intellectual Ability
2. Specific Academic Aptitude
3. Creative or Productive Thinking
4. Leadership Ability
5. Visual/Performing Arts

This law did not, however, indicate any specific national criteria for identifying gifted and talented students. This was left to the states. The result has been a wide variety of definitions and methods for the identification of gifted children.

Gifted Individuals and Program Needs

Gifted students are those who perform or who show promise of performing at high levels in any of the above five categories and who, because of such advanced development require educational services and programs not ordinarily provided by schools to children at their age and grade levels. These programs and services are needed to ensure the growth rather than the loss of their outstanding abilities.

Competing Views of Giftedness

Giftedness is high IQ

Giftedness is multi-faceted

Giftedness is innate

Giftedness is developed in context

Giftedness is test driven

Giftedness is achievement driven

Giftedness has a fixed definition

Giftedness is determined through collaboration

Giftedness is defined by schools

Giftedness is found in many places, not just schools

Giftedness is mostly white & Asian

Giftedness is present in all cultures

I.Q.

“Intelligence Quotient” – A score indicating a fixed amount of intelligence. A high I.Q. score generally denotes superior general intellectual ability, and usually includes a wide range of general knowledge, extensive vocabulary, excellent memory, abstract word knowledge and abstract reasoning ability.

Multiple Intelligences, Learning Styles, Learning Modalities

A number of theories about how children learn have expanded the meaning of intelligence and have changed the way many teachers teach. When looking to identify *gifted* children, these theories can be helpful in broadening our vision, but we must be careful not to fall in the trap of thinking “*all kids are gifted*”. All kids are not far beyond the norm. Look at these theories as you consider differences in children, but remember to look for a level and intensity that sets a gifted child apart from his or her peers.