

## Characteristics of Gifted Students

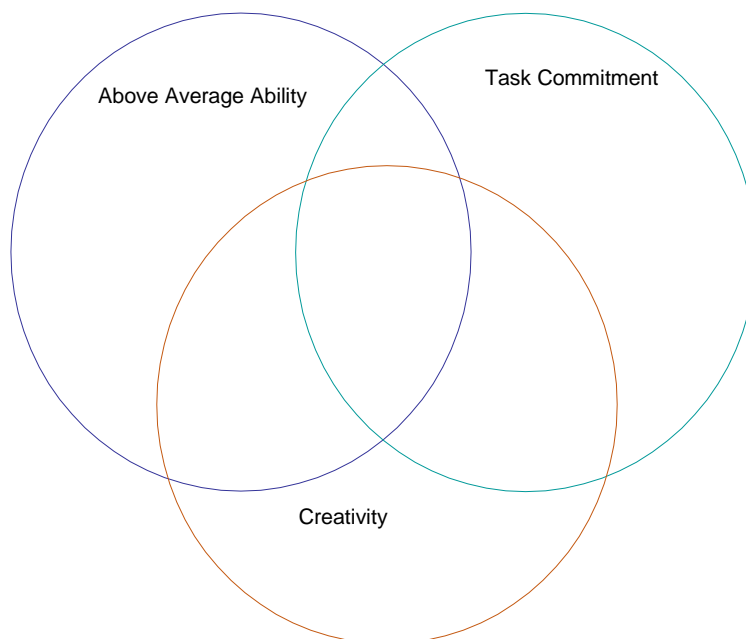
Students who are identified as “gifted” are a diverse group coming from every socioeconomic and cultural background. As no simple definition of giftedness is currently agreed upon by experts in the field, it may be difficult to determine which students would benefit from placement in the SAGE Program. Being talented and gifted not only means different things to different people, but there are many different ways to being talented and gifted. However, a philosophical debate around the definition of giftedness should not cause us to minimize the services we are able to offer these students.

### RENZULLI’S MODEL

The SAGE Program is based upon the work of Renzulli (1978). This model includes a number of characteristics of gifted students who may evidence a number of the following descriptors:

- An unusually rich vocabulary
- Alert and observant
- Reads a great deal on his/her own
- Recognizes relationships
- Is easily bored with routine tasks
- Prefers to work independently
- Strives for perfection
- Often is self-assertive
- Is curious about many things
- Offers unusual, unique and clever answers
- Is uninhibited in giving opinions
- Is nonconforming
- Does not fear being different
- Quick mastery and recall of factual information
- Lots of information on a variety of topics
- Reasons things out
- Comprehends meanings, makes logical associations
- Works persistently on things that interest him/her
- Requires little direction from teachers
- Is self-critical
- May be stubborn in his/her beliefs
- Asks questions about anything and everything
- Originality in written, oral and/or artistic expression
- Displays a keen sense of humour
- Is often concerned with different ways of doing things – will modify, improve, adapt

### Renzulli’s model: Three Ring Conception of Giftedness



## LOOKING FOR THE UNDERACHIEVING GIFTED CHILD

**The underachieving gifted child shows a wide discrepancy between daily performance and ability as determined by tests of intellectual assessment.**

### **Examples of Characteristics of the Underachieving Gifted Child:**

- \* A significant difference between classroom performance and performance on wide-range achievement tests
- \* Seems inattentive/bored with typical school requirements, but "comes alive" when special topics are raised; e.g.: old movies, pollution, gun control, astronomy, life on other planets
- \* Resists revising work; resists doing conventional class assignments
- \* Critical of conventional behaviour
- \* High absenteeism, but keeps up with grades despite missing much formal teaching
- \* Self-taught in some topics not often taught in school
- \* One-sided about some subjects (deep interest to exclusion of all else)
- \* Verbalizes on a wide range of topics, but avoids writing
- \* May have trouble with printing, spelling, or cursive writing
- \* May be a perfectionist to the degree that it interferes with the completion of assignments and, therefore, is viewed as low performance

## LOOKING FOR THE CULTURALLY DIVERSE GIFTED CHILD

**The gifted child, who comes from a culturally diverse background, whether ethnic or economic, demonstrates his or her giftedness in different ways. Given his or her background, the student demonstrates unusual ability to cope with his or her present environment.**

### **Examples of Characteristics of the Culturally Diverse Gifted Child:**

- \* Possesses unusual oral ability (poetry, choral speaking, rhetoric) at a level far beyond his or her peer group
- \* Sees the double meaning (puns) and nuances between two languages he or she uses
- \* Speaks Standard English and conforms to school achievement priorities, yet is able to function in second language or dialect at home and the community very well
- \* When confronted by unique home situations (responsibility for budgeting, making family meals, babysitting, earning money, being "street wise"), he or she is able to cope at a very mature level
- \* Offers constructive criticism of institutional structures and has viable alternatives or solutions
- \* Responds to art, music, dance, sound-type experiences related to his or her heritage with unusual depth and understanding
- \* Performs mechanical (machine-type) tasks with little or no training at home or school
- \* Needs to know and understand the mechanism and operation of machinery which is foreign to him or her
- \* Frequently asks for concrete examples of highly abstract concepts; e.g.: honesty, justice, patriotism
- \* Concerted effort put in researching and gaining extensive knowledge about some hero related to his or her culture
- \* An unorthodox collector (related to cultural heritage) but not necessarily a school valued activity; e.g.: records, photographs from magazines, statistical data (baseball cards) - a vast storage of information on video arcades or basketball records
- \* Is very competent in his or her social roles in the family and community but may not do well academically or socially in the classroom structure
- \* Maintains his or her unique identity while functioning very well in a Canadian social structure
- \* Shows stability and maturity when dealing with communication problems