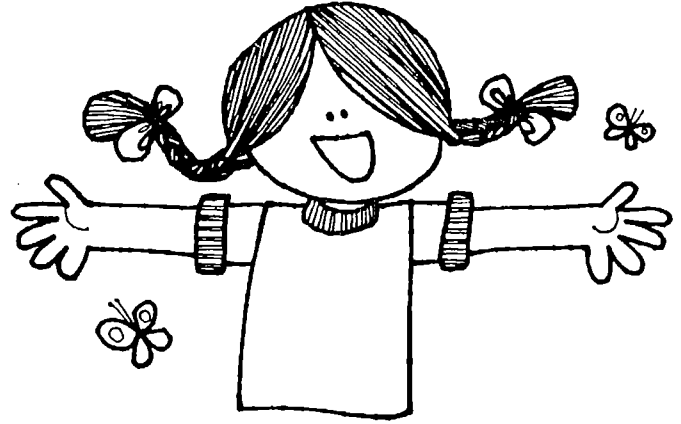


Defining Giftedness

Adapted from the Jackson Public Schools Teacher/
Administrator Gifted Handbook)



The State of Mississippi defines “Intellectually Gifted Children” and “Gifted Education Programs” as follows:

“Intellectually Gifted Children” shall mean those children and youth who are found to have an exceptionally high degree of intelligence as documented through the identification process.”

“Gifted Education Programs” (GEP) shall mean special programs of instruction for intellectually gifted children in grades 2-12, ... in the public elementary and secondary schools of this state. Such programs shall be designed to meet the individual needs of gifted children and shall be in addition to and different from the regular program of instruction provided by the district.”

It is wise to understand that giftedness often is characterized by “asynchronous development* in which advanced cognitive abilities and a heightened capacity for intensity combine, thereby creating inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. Because this asynchrony (or uneven development) increases with higher intelligence, it renders the gifted particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.” (The Columbus Group, 1991, as cited in L. Silverman: *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*, Love Publishing Co., 1993)

Experts agree that effective instruction of gifted students takes place in an environment that

- permits and encourages gifted students to develop their potential through interaction with intellectual peers;
- encourages and nurtures inquiry, flexibility, decision making, thinking skills, and divergent thinking; and
- encourages the use of multiple intelligences.

The curriculum and its deliver system must address the characteristics and needs of the gifted learner, both cognitive (thinking) and affective (social and emotional), which include:

- dealing with perfectionism;
- understanding giftedness;
- developing relationship skills;
- encouraging self reflection;
- encouraging risk taking;
- nurturing inquisitiveness or curiosity;
- addressing an extraordinary learning capability or complexity;
- addressing a preference for intuitive, holistic, and diverse interests; and
- searching for meaning and connectedness through real life problem solving.

*Uneven development. For example, motor skills may lag behind cognitive and conceptual abilities, particularly in younger children. Thus, these children can visualize what they want to do, yet their motor skills may not allow them to achieve their goal. This can result in intense frustration and emotional outbursts. In addition, since the cognitive skills are more pronounced than other areas of development, students may use these to deal with the world, while social and emotional skills remain undeveloped.