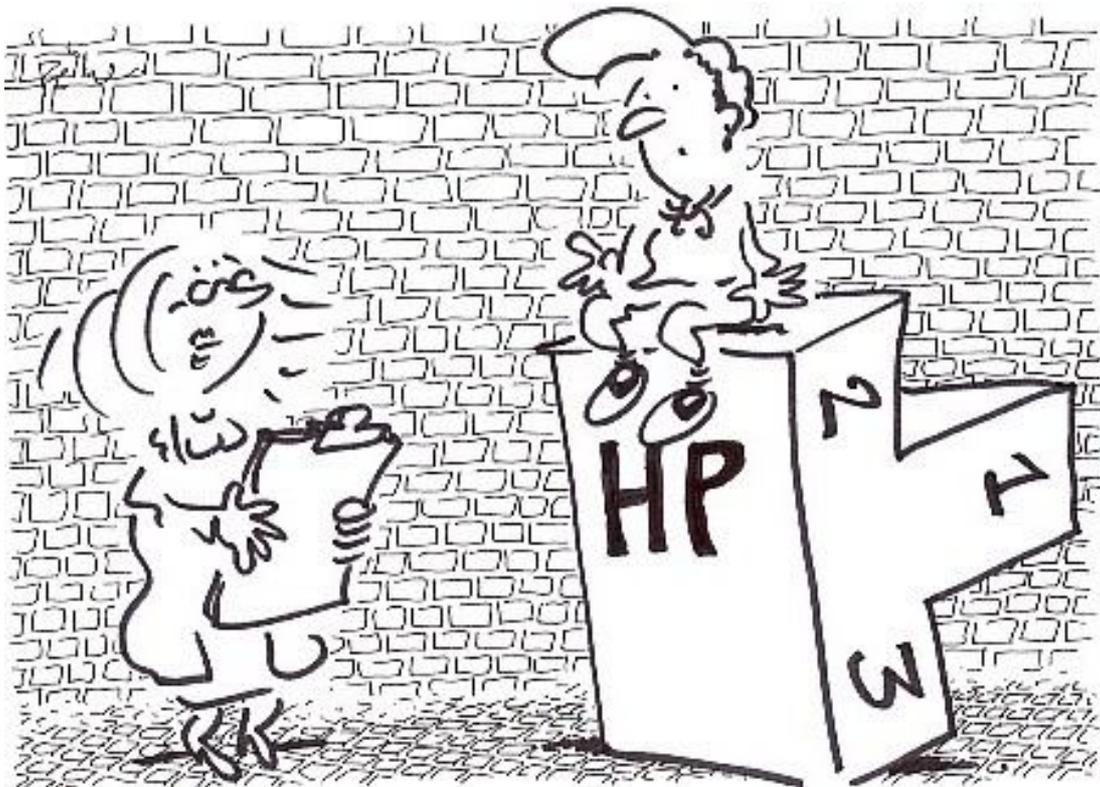




# INTELLECTUALLY GIFTED CHILDREN



## *Information booklet*

**This information booklet**, as well as a list of recommended readings and a list of publications in francophone Switzerland can also be downloaded on the ASEP web site [www.asep-suisse.org](http://www.asep-suisse.org) under "**publications**". In "**conférences**" you can also download the memos of various **workshops** organised by ASEP.

Translated in October 2010



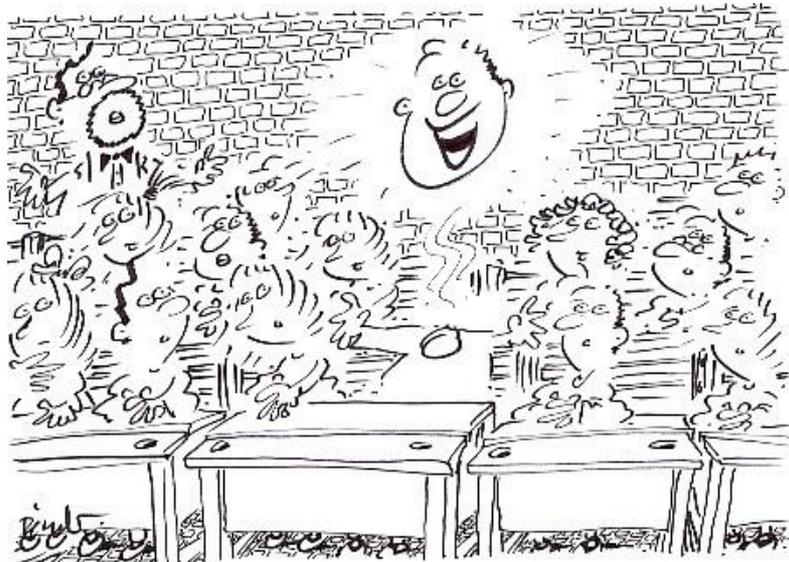
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## GIFTED CHILDREN: FROM MYTH TO REALITY

**The myth:** a young genius, with an encyclopedic knowledge of everything, studious, quick witted, always ready to show off at school...



**The reality is in fact a terrible misunderstanding:** children with an IQ above average (between 100 and 125/130) are active, attractive, with good verbal abilities. They learn to read and write easily around the age of 7 and are sometimes even often deemed "gifted" by their teachers while they are just good students, dedicated and sociable. Often, one assumes that intellectual efficiency automatically leads to good academic results.

In fact, the gifted child (IQ between 125/130 and 160) is often a difficult child who has faced integration problems at school very early in life.

At school, she usually tries to avoid being noticed for fear of being perceived as too bright. Aware of being different, she tries to hide it by sometimes making mistakes on purpose.

She does not like to learn anything by heart, and lacks method or organizational skills, however, she can talk forever about subjects she is passionate about and often changes her focus of interest. Her motor skills are usually not in line with her intellectual development; calligraphy is a problem, so are sportive or manual activities. Her school results are far from satisfactory. Her school reports say "could do better".

Her teachers might consider her lazy, agitated, disturbing or a "daydreamer".



The child often finds it difficult to live with this difference, even more so when it is ignored, denied or rejected.

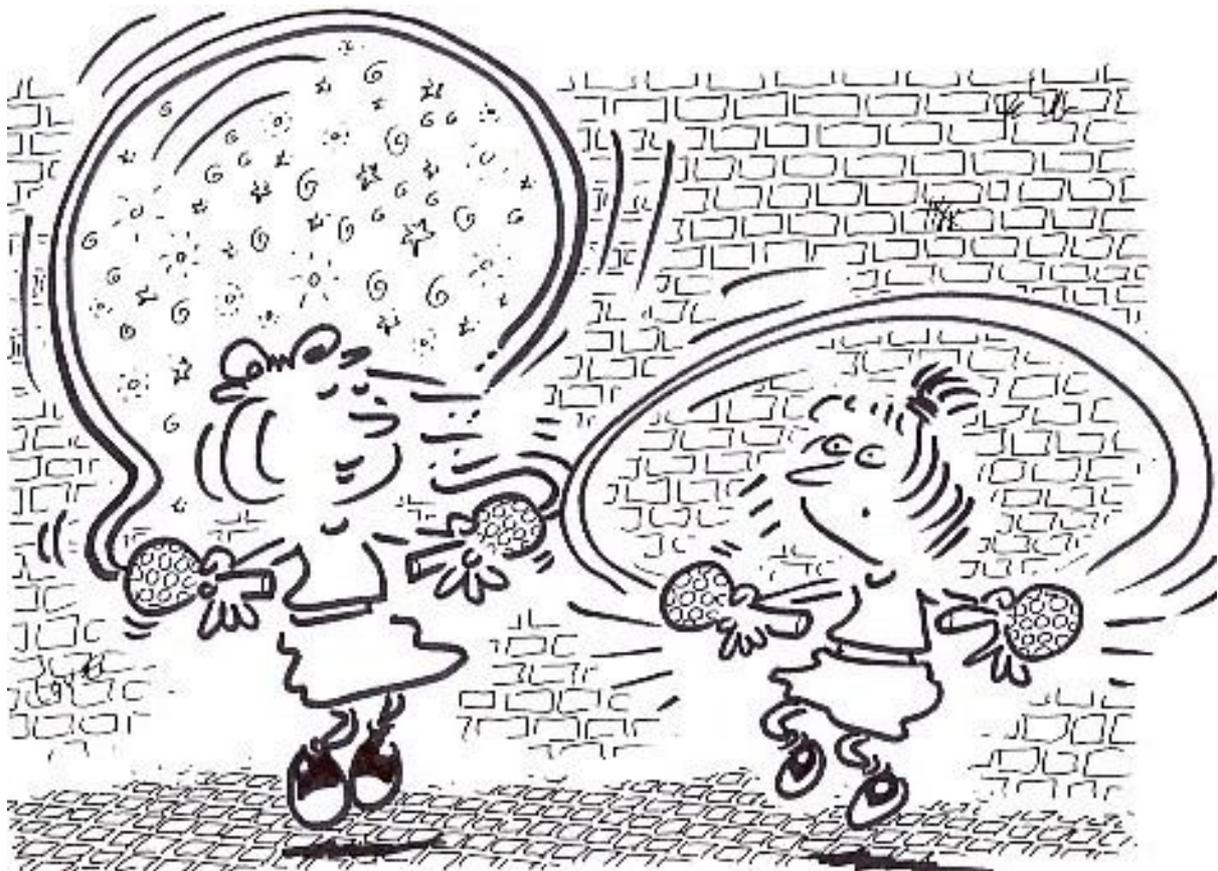
When the child's gift is recognized, some teachers tend to say that the child does not need extra help since she is so bright, or, that "since she is so bright, she should adapt to the level of the others".

However, this is like asking a child with a normal level of intelligence to spend all her school years in a class for intellectually challenged children and to adapt to their level.

Only clear and detailed information can rectify this misunderstanding.

It is horrible for a child to be considered to be what she is not, to not be recognized for what she is. Therefore, after you finish reading the following and if you have some suspicions about a child, we highly recommend you meet with the parents and suggest they consult an experienced educational psychologist for psychological tests.

The earlier a gifted child is identified, recognized and accepted by her parents, teachers and friends, the more she will bloom, be comfortable with who she is and with the way the others perceive her, and the more likely she will be to lead a happy life both socially, emotionally and in her academic or professional pursuits.





## How to identify a gifted child?

- ✓ Very early, the gifted child requires stimulation: she does not like repetitive tasks, or routine. She gets highly interested in something and, when she feels "she has learnt it all", she focuses her attention on something else.
- ✓ She usually masters language very early: there is no "baby talk".
- ✓ Her language skills are so advanced that she often learns to read before primary school and often on her own, without anyone encouraging her to do so.
- ✓ Huge curiosity: she asks many questions, many « whys »: these questions quite quickly touch on the metaphysical side of life. The origin of the universe, of mankind, prehistory.
- ✓ There is often a strong discrepancy (dyssynchrony) between the accuracy of her comments and a behavior that may still be very childish, between her level of understanding of complex matters and her clumsiness in sports or manual activities.
- ✓ High sensitivity – and in particular very sensitive to injustice.
- ✓ Great sense of humor.
- ✓ Boredom in school, often starting in kindergarten.
- ✓ Difficulty integrating into a group, which can be experienced very early; generally, the gifted child prefers the company of adults or older children.
- ✓ She is "in advance". The IQ puts a number on this "advance".
- ✓ Gifted children may not display all these characteristics since all children are different. However, noticing several of these signs should raise some suspicions. Learning to read on one's own, without external assistance, is a nearly sure sign. However, not learning to read at an early age does not mean a child is NOT gifted.



## **The disarray of the gifted child**

Already in kindergarten these children encounter difficulties and some of them do not know where they stand. For instance, they can identify letters and words but they are told that they are too young to learn how to read. What people say about them neither corresponds with the way they feel nor with what they are already capable of doing.

They are pushed by a force they do not understand but which incites them to explore further and further the world around them. This endless curiosity makes them ask questions non-stop. If this thirst for knowledge is denied they turn this force inwards or suppress it and suffer terribly.

In the first year of primary school, they start getting bored and busy themselves the best they can: some look through the window, reflecting on their universe, their dreams... When they come back to earth, they listen once to the teacher's explanation and have understood everything. It works OK and they get "average" results. Those who are more unstable and/or less quiet are agitated and disturb the class... They even get expelled from one school to the next, awaiting the ideal school for their specificity!

They look very much forward to joining secondary school but are quickly disappointed. It appears that they do not know how to study. They have no learning technique. For instance, they rarely know their multiplication tables since they hate rote learning. So far, they have managed because the exercises have been relatively simple: in grammar, they don't know the rules but have always relied on their intuition which was enough to answer relatively simple questions. Now they are told to study but they do not know how. Before, they just needed to read a lesson once. Now, they read and re-read it, to no avail.

They have heard that an intelligent child always manages: they conclude that they are not intelligent. Sometimes their school results even become catastrophic.

They are amazed; they thought they were gifted, that everything was easy. They used to understand everything and suddenly, they have lost this gift. These children think that they have lost everything, and that they have reached their limit. They are depressed.

Their parents also suffer a lot from this situation. Their child with her elegant way of speaking, with her endless curiosity, who always had something interesting to say and whom they were proud of now has turned into a demotivated or even depressed teen or preteen who can't explain what is wrong with her.

This is a tragic description of their school life, but it is also unfortunately an all too frequent occurrence.

They also encounter difficulties integrating: the parents usually understand their child but outside the family, the difference is immediately perceived: the others, sometimes very



subtly, don't include her. She is never willingly chosen as a team member or she is obviously ignored, sometimes even mobbed.

Gifted children often display a great sense of humor. This starts very early and the other children do not understand those jokes which make the adults laugh; gifted children do not really enjoy vulgar or simple jokes which appeal to other children. They do not enjoy vulgarity or violence.



They do not feel affectively fulfilled and the worst is that they are told that it is their fault because they are too demanding.

The most tragic situation is when gifted children do not express their needs because they have sensed, thanks to their intelligence, that their problems are not welcomed in the family. So they keep quiet, tend to be as invisible and neutral as possible, so as not to attract attention. They have average school results.

When they are grown up, they will be scarred from childhood. They will often be brilliant, with a sarcastic sense of humor, aggressive in a funny way so quickly forgiven: but deep down, they will be frustrated and miserable.

Gifted children have two fundamental needs:

- ✓ To feel at peace with themselves and their "difference" (with their teachers and their friends).
- ✓ To develop their astonishing potential.

Encouraging these children to reach their potential will benefit each and every one of us. Giftedness is a blessing for society.



## IQ TESTS

The tests invented by BINET in 1904 measure the child's mental age with regards to her actual age (in years of life). A gifted child displays a mental age of 2 to 8 years over the "chronological" age. An 8 year old with a very high IQ could have the mental age of a 16 year old.

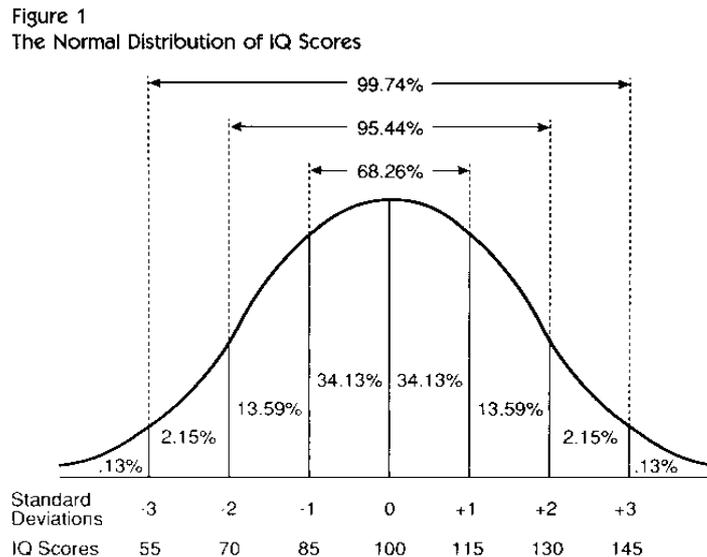
Currently, the most widely used tests are Wechsler's which enable a statistical comparison. The IQ is no longer compared to the chronological age but is **measured statistically** to a "**standard IQ**" which defines the child's rank in comparison to children his age. The IQ is no longer very important, what matters is the rank, i.e. the number of individuals in the reference group with an identical IQ to the tested individual. Wechsler's tests measure IQs up to 160, some US tests go even further. For information, 1 person out of 31'000 has an IQ over 160.



Thus, giftedness is defined by a statistical norm of normal average development for one population. The average IQ is 100 with a standard deviation of 15. The standard is therefore between 85 and 115.



The IQ is distributed following a bell-shape curve:



Scanné de : "SENSE AND NONSENSE ABOUT IQ"  
Charles LOCURTO - Ed. Praeger (NY) 1991 - Page 5

This curve shows that 1 in 20 children has an IQ over 125 (5 % of the population), and 1 in 1000 children has an IQ over 145 (0.1 % of the population).

**As a summary, this statistical study shows that IQs between 85 and 115 are deemed normal, IQs below 70 define learning difficulties, and IQs over 125/130 define intellectual giftedness. However, a "sensitive" zone exists between 125 and 130; indeed these figures are not barriers but references; the global intellectual profile is often more interesting than the global IQ figure. The "potential ability assessment" is an indirect measurement which cannot be compared to height or weight measurement. This IQ can totally correspond to the child's potential or can underestimate it (especially if the child is going through a difficult phase). However, it is impossible to overestimate the potential and we can therefore say without doubt that a child with an IQ over 130 is gifted.**

**The further the IQ differs from the norm, the less the amount of individuals in that group and the more obvious the differences, even compared with other gifted children.**

**One number is clearly not enough to describe one child. Her intelligence, though of utmost importance, is only one of the components of her personality, namely at school.**



## What does the IQ measure?

The IQ is a comparative measurement of intellectual abilities. It helps evaluate the intellectual efficiency with a list of questions and standardized tasks intended to measure one individual's abilities to behave in an efficient and relevant manner.

However, a child cannot be reduced to this number only. The IQ does not measure the globalism of intelligence but only the individual's intellectual efficiency at the time the test was taken.

For example, the psychological test WISC-IV (Wechsler's test for children aged 6 to 16, latest 2005 version) determines scores in the following fields:

- ✓ Verbal: logic, abstraction, understanding of values and social norms, deduction. These tests make up the verbal understanding score.
- ✓ Non-verbal: logic, deduction, abstraction, visual and spatial reasoning. These tests make up the perceptive reasoning score.
- ✓ Working memory (short term listening & verbal memory).
- ✓ Processing speed: graphic and motor skills
- ✓ The global IQ is made up of these 4 scores.
  - ⇒ The intellectual profile is analyzed in detail and gives important information to assist the child in identifying her weak and strong points.
  - ⇒ The total global IQ is made up of these 4 scores, and could sometimes, if the discrepancies are big, give an erroneous image of the tested subject.

Research shows that, in 87% of cases, the IQ is stable. However, for 13% of cases, a 10 point difference exists and in 3% of cases, a 15 points difference was noted (1998, Canivez & Watkins, study of 667 children who took the WISC-III twice within 2.87 years). We can see that usually, the IQ is stable but it is a statistical average that is of little meaning without an accompanying individual analysis.



## SPOTTING A GIFTED CHILD AT SCHOOL

Not all gifted children are best in their class. However, among the best performers there are also many gifted students, especially among the girls. Gifted children with difficulties are more frequently identified and it is of utmost importance that they receive assistance so that they can make the best use of their potential and integrate in our society. But gifted children without apparent problems also have different needs. **It is essential that these needs be met, to assist in the psycho-affective development and to prevent failures which are very frequent during teenage years.**

This table is extracted from « *L'enfant surdoué, l'aider à grandir, l'aider à réussir* » by Jeanne Siaud-Facchin. These hints, neither exhaustive nor systematic, may alert you and justify testing your child.

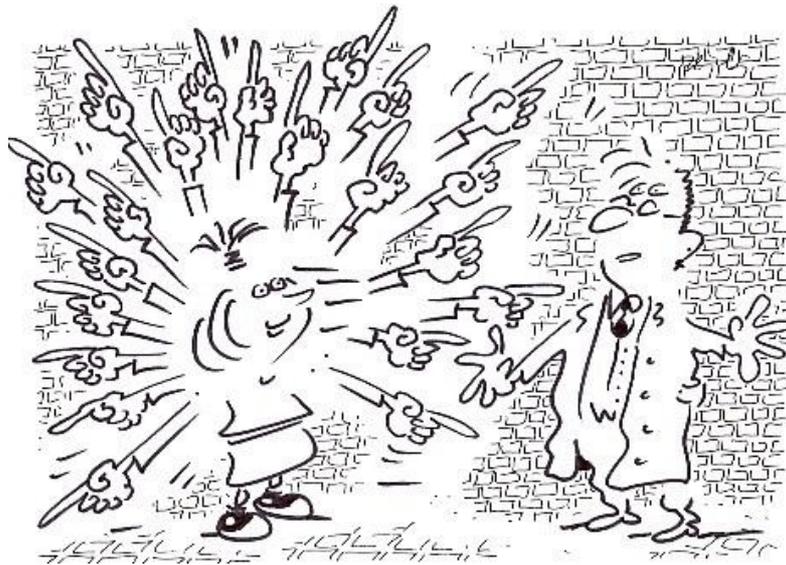
WHAT WE OBSERVE	WHAT WE UNDERSTAND
Very irregular school results. Excellent in one subject for one year and disastrous in the same subject the year after...	The child's investment in school work depends on her level of affection and respect towards the teacher. She tests the competency and abilities of the teacher. She needs boundaries and trust to operate at her best.
She constantly asks for proof and justification from the teachers.	She needs meaning and reassurance to keep going.
Noisy active participation or total withdrawal	Enthusiasm for school and intellectual curiosity or total boredom
Talkative, rowdy, dreamer, agitated... but listening	Specific concentration mechanisms, acute need to do several things at once to be able to concentrate.
Cannot explain how she found a solution to a problem, cannot develop her reasoning	Intuitive functioning, analogical thinking through the right hemisphere
Excellent oral skills, appalling written skills	Discrepancy between verbal and written skills.
Often alone and isolated in the playground	Rejected by other children due to the perceived difference, lonely because she can't find children with a similar way of functioning and similar centers of interest.
Inadequate answer or no answer from an otherwise brilliant student. Irrelevant answer although she appears to have understood all the subtleties of the subject	Differences of implicit (presumed tacit), importance of the literal sense, arborescent way of thinking, divergent way of thinking



## Gifted children at school

Catherine Leiser, professor of physics in Paris (Fénelon Lycée), has observed students during 11 years and has listed typical characteristics which she believes can define giftedness in some of them. Negatives and positives are combined:

<u>POSITIVES</u>	<u>NEGATIVE</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Fast</li><li>✓ Curious</li><li>✓ Witted</li><li>✓ Intuitive</li><li>✓ Good memory</li><li>✓ Real or potential work capacity</li><li>✓ Imagination</li><li>✓ Originality</li><li>✓ Strong personality, strong character</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Not very academic</li><li>✓ Lack of in-depth thinking</li><li>✓ Lack of method</li><li>✓ Lack of motivation</li><li>✓ Superficial or insufficient way of studying</li><li>✓ Inefficient in routine tasks</li><li>✓ Lack of focus</li><li>✓ Bad use of intuition</li></ul>



As a summary, by using her good memory, her quick mindedness and her ease to adapt, the student makes up for irregular studying, a frequent lack of motivation and lack of methods... Used to finding school easy (good memory, intuition), the student is constantly under-stimulated and she succeeds without really needing to organize her work.



During primary school, she will not really need to confront a learning process entailing efforts and challenges.

Some will use their abilities to avoid making any effort, others will stay vigilant and will manage to adapt when the level becomes more difficult and eventually interesting. Academic failure in gifted children is seen in 1 girl for 4 boys and in 16% of all children all ages and genders. However, in children aged 12 to 18, failure is much more frequent, up to 50%, easily fixable with adequate assistance. These statistics relate to gifted children identified by psychometric testing.

The large variety of functioning modes of gifted children does not allow us to describe the "typical child" which would be a caricature.

But they have points in common, due to the large discrepancy between their level of intelligence and the schooling level, which sometimes makes them feel inadequate; this varies with age.



## A DIFFERENT MODE OF INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING

Gifted children process information in a very different way than the average population.

They have more important capacities for analogical processing, a faster processing speed, they basically understand faster. Their short term memory is twice the norm and their long term memory is also larger than the norm.

In her book *"The Gifted Child"*, Jeanne Siaud-Facchin explains how studies on the brain have shown that gifted children use their right hemisphere (which treats information globally, simultaneously and manages emotions) more than their left hemisphere (which analyses and breaks down information sequentially). It would also appear that their brain can receive a larger quantity of information at the same time and that exchanges between both hemispheres are faster.

In parallel to psychometric testing (IQ tests), a second category of tests has been developed by Anglo-Saxon research to appreciate divergent thinking, that means the ability of an individual to find original and innovative alternative solutions to situations she may be faced with.

This research has shed a new light on intuition, which was long considered to be a sixth sense. **This processing seems particularly effective with gifted children who are better at applying solutions than at explaining them.** They use formal logical thinking, divergent thinking and intuition with a rare ability and ease, in a very speedy way.

Jeanne Siaud-Facchin also explains that **gifted children use arborescent thinking**, while so-called "normal" children think in a sequential way. "Arborescent" thinking can also be described as "Visual-Spatial" thinking.

The school system is based on the sequential way of thinking. This is why gifted children feel out of place and why teachers do not understand why a child who was officially declared "intelligent" is incapable of applying learning methods or problem resolution strategies which have proved adequate with so many other children.

For instance, if the teacher gives a mathematical problem with additions and subtractions, the gifted child will immediately give the correct answer but will be incapable of explaining how she got to it. If we ask her to explain how she found the solution, she won't be capable of explaining and will answer that she "just knew". This probably will lead to a bad grade and the teacher will conclude that the child has not understood anything while she simply has not understood the sequential problem resolution method proposed by the school system.

Similarly, when asked to write an essay describing her holidays, the average child will tell a story with a beginning, a middle and an end while the gifted child will get lost in her thoughts and souvenirs, each thought bringing a new idea or remembrance and one hour later, when she



notices that her page is still blank, she will launch into a furious bout of writing, most probably not on the given subject.

The gifted child does not naturally possess the ability to organize her thoughts sequentially.

## What are their needs and how can we help them?

### A need for recognition

It is important that the child be detected through psychometric tests and then recognized and accepted for what she is. **Since she feels different, the gifted child easily loses her self confidence; this phenomenon is often seen in subjects who are outside the norm.** It is also a good idea not to consider that her competencies are normal (due to her high IQ) but to congratulate and praise her as we do with other children when they have good results. These sensitive children need to feel encouraged and backed up by their families and teachers, like all other children. **The difference lies in the fact that the gifted child, considered highly intelligent, can be more easily left to fend for herself; the adults will naturally focus their attention on children with learning difficulties.**





### **A need for complexity**

In her book *"How to help your highly gifted child"*, Stéphanie Tolan gives the following example: she takes the vision we have of the world, stating that most people see it through a lens (sometimes blurry) while gifted children see it through a microscope and, for highly gifted children with an IQ over 145, through an electronic microscope. They see things in a very different way and often see things that others don't.

And even though there are advantages to this very strong perception, there are also downsides. Arielle Ada shares this opinion; she believes gifted children also feel things on the affective and emotional level with more acuity and seem to guess things that others can't see (« *L'enfant doué, l'intelligence réconciliée* » A. Adda - H. Catroux).

Stéphanie Tolan also reminds us that even though gifted children learn faster than others, they also learn differently. The standard methods of education cut up the subjects in manageable units presented one after the other. The gifted child's brain can manage a large quantity of information and they thrive on complexity. "Giving these children units of simple information is like feeding an elephant one blade of grass after the other - it will die of starvation before even noticing that someone is trying to feed it".

*"If they have understanding difficulties in school, their way of processing information becomes appallingly bad and they don't learn anything. Inappropriate teaching, because too easy, kills all motivation. The only way for them to function is to receive 5 to 10 times more information than the other children. (J.-P. Tassin, French neurobiologist)*

This does not mean that the child knows everything and will master easily the complexity of learning, but she needs this complexity to use all her intellectual resources.

### **A need for motivation**

Since these children have a large need for complexity, they will easily be demotivated by an easy task that they probably won't finish, while they will be stimulated by an intellectual challenge which would appear unachievable to any other child. They also need to feel supported and encouraged by their teachers and their parents.

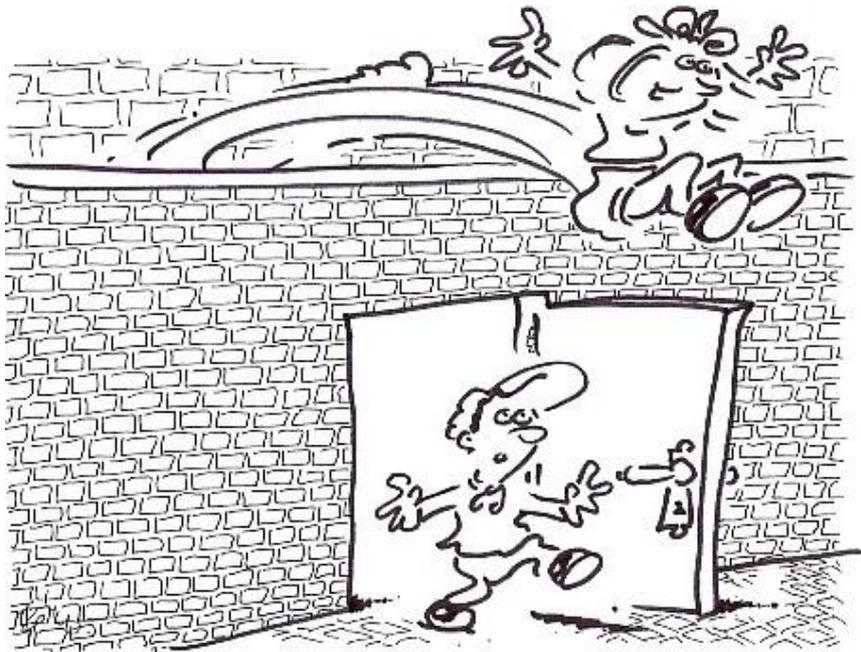
It is important that the teacher favors variety, allows the child to choose the topics to study (essays, presentations), and presents her with challenges, difficult exercises or enigmas. The teacher can propose an activity in line with the subject studied but which will be challenging to her (research), and add creative thinking during the daily lessons. For instance, questions starting with: what would happen if?



## Solutions

Several solutions can be considered and they depend on the child's character, personality and maturity: **acceleration**, **enrichment** and **intensification**.

Often, the child's immediate environment will define the best solutions. **There is no standard solution and it is of utmost importance to analyze the child's specific situation.**



### Acceleration

**Acceleration** means **respecting the child's rhythm of intellectual development** and means jumping one, sometimes two (for children with an IQ over 145) grades. In the classic school system, it can happen at various points. Starting primary school one year early is quite wise for children who are mature enough.

For the children who can already read in kindergarten, they may jump the first year of primary school and start directly in second year. Acceleration avoids a large discrepancy between the child's intellectual abilities, her learning rhythm and the school program. The main drawback is an even larger discrepancy between her and the other children's motor skills, especially when jumping two grades. Acceleration is neither a definitive nor an ideal solution for all children. Children with an IQ over 145 will rarely be satisfied with only **one** jump.



### Enrichment

**Enrichment** gives the child a **wider access to information, enabling her to synthesize in a more elaborate way**. Here, we are talking about “feeding” the child’s intellectual curiosity. She can practice this enrichment herself of through tools supplied to her.

In general, a gifted child does not need as long as his school friends to go through the school’s official program. **Practicing 100 times to learn how to add is of very little interest when she already masters the technique after 10 additions, sometimes even less.**

This is when the teacher can supply her with enriching material (books, different exercises, etc..) while the others finish their work.

Novelty is attractive and the possibility to practice more challenging activities will help the child not get bored while helping her practice her reasoning skills. Children are usually happy to use their creativity to prepare presentations or other group projects. Activities like outings or field trips are especially adapted to this pedagogical solution.

### Intensification

**Intensification**, means **acquiring a deeper knowledge of the “official” subjects of the school year**. The idea is not, like for enrichment, to multiply the subjects but to study specific subjects in depth.

Tools used for enrichment and for intensification can obviously be combined. In 1951, De Craecker already explained that intensification for gifted children contributed “not only to their mental development but also to their moral and social well-being, enabling them, namely, to understand and accept their obligations towards the other students”.



## LEARNING ABOUT METHODS; METHODS TO LEARN

To reduce the handicap that represents her arborescent way of thinking, it is important to help the child understand how she functions and teach her how to use the classic methods of learning from an early age. We should however not deny her own thinking mechanism but rather help her understand how the methods used at school will help her succeed not only at school but in her future job. These methods must be applied to enable her to be successful.

In their book « *L'enfant doué, l'intelligence réconciliée* » Arielle Adda and Hélène Catroux propose the use of mental management (see also [books by Antoine de la Garanderie](#)) to assist gifted children to understand and analyze the way their brain works but also to acquire learning methods. These methods teach them to organize their thoughts, recycle information and explain what they have learnt.

### On a practical side :

A gifted child in class means extra work for the teacher. S/he will need to think, investigate, train and innovate but, if taken positively, this challenge will be an enrichment for the entire class.

Here are a few suggestions, coming from European and American specialists, as well as solutions implemented by teachers in francophone Switzerland.

Anyone can adapt them or get inspiration from them. It depends on the teacher's personality and sensitivity. It is of utmost importance to propose a subject that you like teaching.

**Congratulate and encourage** the child, do not take her results for granted despite her potential. These children are very demanding towards themselves and are quick to lose self-confidence. They need recognition for their efforts and performance. If they don't receive this, they feel like a "failure".

**Discuss the globalism of learning.** The gifted child needs to know where she is headed. In mathematics, it is a good idea to present the exercise globally then describe every single operation necessary to solve the problem. In history, present the era that will be studied then discuss the various events that produced the historical fact.

While it is important to sympathize about her differences, it is as important to **help her acquire methods to learn**. Lead her to reflect on her intellectual functioning and explain it to her. When a child is very good in one subject, help her identify the strategies used and encourage her to use the same in subjects where she may be struggling a little more. Help her structure her knowledge because she doesn't likely know any method to learn.



Teach her how to present a project or a presentation. **Formalize** a path to follow, meaning show her a method in a subject where she is less competent. **Give a meaning to what she is learning**: gifted children always need to know the reasons why they are asked to do things.

In primary school, for each class, children are supplied with exercise papers. **Often, only one exercise is enough for a gifted child to understand**. Having to do 5 or 6 more is close to torture and she finds it very difficult to endlessly practice what she considers useless.

We can also suggest that **she creates exercises herself** for her friends, that she helps those who do not understand or simply that she takes a book and reads. Avoid making her the constant assistant to the teacher; this may entail jealousy from her classmates, which would be enormously painful for her.

**Children who have finished their work should be proposed with attractive activities** linked to the day's lessons. They can be encouraged to link one lesson with another subject studied.

Encourage them to research more information on a subject so as to create a written or verbal story, a theater play, a presentation for the class...

**When they use their knowledge and their hunger to learn (therefore their difference) to help the remaining students in the class, they feel very useful and it helps them feel comfortable in their class.**

To avoid boredom, it is preferable to **enable them to go beyond** what they already know. It is good to **suggest** an activity linked to the lesson but which will be a **challenge** to them. Repetitive exercises hold no interest whatsoever to them.

Another good idea is to **suggest that they could manage a project**; ask them to think about what type of project they would be interested in, how they can use the knowledge they have and how they prefer to express it (create a game of cards, a scientific experiment, a theater play, a painting, etc...). The other children in the class are usually quite interested in these individual projects that add a little novelty in the class.

Finally, **for group work**, it is preferable, as much as possible, to let the child choose their group (and their subject) and to lay the ground rules:

- ✓ Try more than one idea,
- ✓ Speak in turns,
- ✓ Help each other, do one's best,
- ✓ Listen to the others,
- ✓ And ask for the teacher's assistance in case of a significant disagreement.



When the work is finished, children must be evaluated on an individual basis, on their individual work more than on the way everybody contributed. One of the reasons gifted children do not like to work in groups is that they find it unfair to share a bad grade with a group because the group followed the majority vote and not theirs, even though they knew their subject perfectly. Or that the entire group relied on them and that they were the only ones who contributed.

When the gifted teenager is experiencing difficulties, or even failure, she mainly needs people in her surroundings to assist her to get back on track and re-enter the learning process. Recognizing her extraordinary abilities is fundamental but accepting and understanding her disarray in front of her unexpected failure is indispensable to assist her to reintegrate in the school system ("*School failure of the gifted child*", article by Claudia Jankech and Jean Claude Anthamatten, [www.jankech.ch](http://www.jankech.ch)).

**To summarize, these children like stimulation and challenges. Imaginative and creative, they like to "explore" knowledge. When a teacher takes advantage of these characteristics, it is enriching for the entire class.**

#### The gifted child and associated learning disorders:

When a gifted child is failing at school, before assuming that the teaching methods are the only reason for the problem, it is wise to check whether she may suffer from dyslexia-dysorthographie (learning difficulties for the written language, including reading and spelling) and/or HDD (with or without hyperactivity). Gifted children can hide these problems through compensatory strategies. However, from the 5<sup>th</sup>, maybe 7<sup>th</sup> year of school, these difficulties will become an immense hurdle and may lead the gifted child to failure. These difficulties can only be identified by specialists. In the case of dyslexia, the earlier the child starts treatment, the better (see document on the conference "Intelligence and Dyslexia", May 2007).

In general, the identification process of these learning difficulties in the gifted child is different from the process with a "normal" child. They are diagnosed later and with more difficulties; this can generate many misunderstandings and give a negative image of the child whose family and teacher may perceive as gifted but a low performer.



## AS A CONCLUSION

*"Gifted children are not really like the others but, like the others, they are children"*  
Dr. Olivier Revol.

Despite the myths, we shouldn't expect prodigious achievements or exceptional results. Their difference is often a real handicap to them. Gifted with a remarkable memory, they can learn effortlessly what they are interested in but find it very hard to learn "off by heart", especially what they find "meaningless".

Even if they seem gifted with seriously above-average cognitive competencies, these hypersensitive children suffer from stress more than the others. Affectivity is their main driver and their behaviour is often influenced by their environment. De-motivated, they will lose their interest and their drive. Enrichment and intensification of the school program can partially help them to re-motivate.



Gifted children need a precise frame, even more than other children. The school system must allow them to use their extra intellectual abilities but also teach them learning methods to ensure that they do not only rely on their competencies.

In parallel, it is important for them to understand how they think and to make the best use of their abilities. They also need to learn how to use the school system methods; that's the key to their adaptation.

These children need an adapted pedagogy, which takes into account not only their learning rhythm and their potential, but their weaknesses as well.



## FURTHER READINGS

### FOR PARENTS:

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- **Smart Girls. A New Psychology of Girls, Women and Giftedness.**  
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**FOR TEACHERS – EDUCATORS – HOMESCHOOLING PARENTS:**

- **The Schoolwide Enrichment Model. How To Guide for Educational Excellence (2nd ed.)**  
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**LINKS:**

- National Association for Gifted Children NAGC: [www.nagc.org](http://www.nagc.org)
- European Council for High Ability ECHA: [www.echa.ws](http://www.echa.ws)
- Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development: [www.gifted.uconn.edu](http://www.gifted.uconn.edu)
- Educational Resources for Lifelong Learning: [www.alspublishing.com](http://www.alspublishing.com)
- Understanding Evolution for Teachers:  
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**OF COURSE, THIS LIST IS NON-EXHAUSTIVE!**

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