Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors

The degree of frequency, complexity, and intensity of the demonstrated traits, aptitudes, and behaviors determine whether students require differentiated instruction in Gifted and Talented/Advanced Academics (GT/AA) programs and services. Observing and documenting the frequency, complexity, and intensity of a behavior can contribute to a student’s profile and inform instructional choices.

**Frequency** refers to the rate of occurrence or the number of times any event recurs in a given period.

**Complexity** refers to intricacy or sophistication and can be demonstrated and documented through a student’s response, performance, or product.

**Intensity** refers to the passion and energy that a student demonstrates when engaged in an area of interest or ability.

Students requiring GT/AA are, by their very nature, diverse in their range and expression of giftedness (Tomlinson, 2001). The following should be considered:

- Student strengths may be inconsistently demonstrated within and across disciplines.
- Students may selectively demonstrate their abilities only in an area of personal interest.
- Students may intentionally mask potential due to perfectionism or fear of failure.
- Students may demonstrate potential when the learning environment and experiences are designed to address and support learning preferences.
- Students may demonstrate potential when the learning environment and experiences support intellectual risk-taking.
- Students’ strengths or potential may be masked by their educational disabilities.

Recognizing that there is a complex interaction of factors, the purpose of the **Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors of Advanced and High Potential Students** chart is to stimulate dialogue among educators, enhancing the investigation into the identification and provision of service for students with advanced or high potential abilities (VanTassel-Baska, 2003). There are many ways for students to demonstrate gifted traits, aptitudes, and behaviors and, subsequently, there are many ways to gather evidence and supporting documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait, Aptitude, or Behavior</th>
<th>Description of Trait, Aptitude, or Behavior</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The student may demonstrate evidence of:</strong></td>
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| **Motivation/Task Commitment** | - Internal drive; little need for external motivation  
- Persistence in pursuing or completing self-selected tasks  
- Concentrating for longer periods when interested  
- Initiating projects  
- Working independently at an earlier age  
- Playing around, yet testing well  
- Seemingly boundless energy and endurance  
- A common attitude of “I’d rather do it myself”  
- Fascination and involvement in a particular problem, area of study, or form of human expression  
- Attraction to complicated material; boredom with routine tasks |
| **Interests** | - Intense, sustained, sometimes unusual or advanced interests  
- Unceasing pursuit of an activity beyond the group  
- A wide range of interests  
- Intellectual playfulness  
- Self-taught concepts, ideas, or content  
- Immersion in task of personal interest; “labor of love” |
| **Communication**   | • Highly expressive communications skills  
|                    | • Use of examples, illustrations, or elaborations  
|                    | • An extensive vocabulary  
|                    | • An ability to pick up and interpret nonverbal cues and draw inferences  
|                    | • Early or avid reading ability  
|                    | • Reading a variety of genres and interests  
|                    | • A preference for books and magazines written for older students  
|                    | • Advanced oral skills  
|                    | • Advanced written language skills  
|                    | • Interest in word-play  
|                    | • Advanced artistic expression  
|                    | • Advanced dramatic expression  
|                    | • Thinking faster than able to write  
|                    | • Preference for speaking over writing  |
| **Problem Solving** | • Creating new designs  
|                    | • Inventing strategies for recognizing and solving problems  
|                    | • Playing around yet testing well  
|                    | • Thriving on complexity  
|                    | • Tackling tasks and problems in a well-organized, goal-directed, and efficient manner  
|                    | • Attacking complicated material by separating it into components and analyzing it systematically  
|                    | • Requiring little direction from teachers  
|                    | • Continuing despite setbacks  
|                    | • Daring to differ, challenge, change, make mistakes, and fail  |
| **Memory**         | • Having considerable information on school or non-school topics  
|                    | • An extensive background of knowledge  
|                    | • The need for only one or two repetitions for mastery  
|                    | • Paying attention to details  
|                    | • Being a good guesser  |
| **Curiosity/    | • Asking unusual questions for age  
| Inquisitiveness** | • Playing around with ideas  
|                    | • Exhibiting a sense of wonder  
|                    | • Demonstrating many interests, hobbies, or collections  
|                    | • Receptiveness to new thoughts, actions, and products  |
| **Insight**        | • Quickly grasping new ideas  
|                    | • A heightened capacity for seeing unusual and diverse relationships  
|                    | • Keen powers of observation and a sense of the significant  
|                    | • Making valid generalizations about events, people, or objects  |
| **Sensitivity**    | • Strong reactions of compassion  
|                    | • An awareness of global issues  
|                    | • A keen sense of justice  
|                    | • Early moral and ethical concern; empathy  
|                    | • Being highly self-critical  
|                    | • Perfectionism  
|                    | • An orientation toward success  
|                    | • Hesitation to try something where failure is a possibility  
|                    | • Skeptical, critical, and evaluative attitudes  
|                    | • An attraction to aesthetic values  |
| Humor | • Conveying and picking up on humor easily  
• Precocity; maturity for age  
• Humor expressed both in work and in social situations  
• The capacity for seeing the unusual  
• Seeing humor in situations that may not appear to be humorous to others; the ability to see relationships and make connections |
| --- | --- |
| Intensity | • Strong reactions, responses, and behaviors  
• Heightened sensory experiences  
• Seeking intellectual stimulation  
• Questioning authority; nonconforming  
• Critically examining adult pronouncements  
• Uninhibited intellectual willingness to express opinions and ideas  
• Spirited disagreement with the statements, opinions, ideas, and beliefs of others  
• Belief in his/her ability to carry out important work |
| Interpersonal | • A preference to respond and relate to older student and adults  
• Interest in mature or sophisticated issues or topics  
• Resistance to cooperative or collaborative learning  
• Social challenges with peers |
| Intrapersonal | • Self-confidence  
• Self-awareness and reflection  
• Motivation by personal goals and beliefs  
• Freedom from feelings of inferiority  
• A drive to achieve  
• Setting high standards for self  
• A sense of excellence about his/her own work and the work of others  
• Openness toward new experiences; being adventurous  
• A willingness to take risks in thought and actions |
| Creativity | • The production of many ideas  
• The production of highly original ideas; imagination  
• Exceptional ingenuity in using everyday materials  
• A vivid imagination  
• Fluent thinking in generating possibilities, consequences, or related ideas  
• Flexible thinking using different alternatives or approaches  
• Original thinking seeking new, unusual, or unconventional associations and combinations  
• Elaborate thinking embellishing basic ideas, situations, or problems  
• Non-traditional responses and products |
| Reasoning | • Logical approaches to figuring out solutions  
• Thinking things through in a logical manner  
• Judgment that seems mature for age  
• Making quick perceptions of similarities, differences, and anomalies  
• Seeing relationships and making connections not readily apparent  
• An ability to spot inconsistencies and to cope with uncertainty  
• Sorting out relevant and irrelevant information associated with a particular problem or area of study  
• Common sense  
• A willingness to debate topics at greater depth |