

Grinnel's adaptations

# FOCUS Identity

## What Does Gifted Mean?

I know that teachers of the gifted feel isolated and misunderstood. They also wonder, "Can I be a good teacher of the gifted?" I want to explore this with teachers and have them look at

### Background

I like to begin a group series with at least one other topic before addressing giftedness, per se. Since the focus of this book is on development, discussing development in general—without considering achievement, lack of achievement, or the "gifted" label—conveys that development is a universal phenomenon and that it deserves discussion apart from a person's place on a bell curve of ability. However, the label and the concept of giftedness are both worthy of discussion. The experience of development is likely to be qualitatively different for gifted teens than for others, and the gifted label may feel heavy. The concept and label are also controversial. This session is an opportunity to explore, in a safe setting, how giftedness is interpreted and experienced.

### Objectives

- ⊗ Gifted teens understand how ~~giftedness~~ <sup>being a teacher of the gifted</sup> is interpreted and identified in their school or other setting.
- ✓ They recognize that *giftedness* and *intelligence* are terms applied to abilities, characteristics, and skills that are valued in a ~~particular culture~~ <sup>their school culture</sup>.
- ✓ Through articulating personal strengths, they affirm capabilities and enhance self-esteem.
- ✓ They learn that it is all right to have limitations.
- ✓ They learn more about themselves and become better at assessing themselves realistically.
- ✓ They learn to value their own and others' strengths.

Introductions  
"I am..."  
table tents.

### Suggestions

1. Ask the group what ~~they understand about giftedness~~ <sup>it feels like to be a teacher of gifted</sup>. Let them be the teachers. It is important that you find out what they know before offering new information. Some may not have thought much about the concept, may not consider themselves gifted, and may not embrace the term, even if they have been identified for a ~~program~~. Some may wear the label as a badge of honor; others may reject it. Be prepared to explain the ~~program philosophy and identification criteria used in the teens' school(s) or district(s) (if you are aware of those)~~. Offering the following information may help establish a group climate that values genuine thoughts, feelings, and opinions and is not preoccupied with "right" and "wrong" responses.

From J. Peterson  
The Essential Guide to Talking with Gifted Teens

★ Be aware that creating an atmosphere of unconditional respect and trust takes time. Receive whatever the students say without judgment or challenge.

**Important**

Side info but interesting not essential. I used "When Gifted Kids Don't have all the answers" (2015) Ch 4 Being a Gifted Ed. Teacher.

Cultures differ in what is deemed to be gifted. One of my own studies found that U.S.-dominant-culture classroom teachers, when nominating children for a special program, generally valued individual, competitive, conspicuous achievement—looking for verbal assertiveness, “standing out,” and a strong work ethic in classroom work, for instance. These are the same values held by the U.S.-dominant culture as a whole, according to anthropologists. In contrast, representatives of a Latino community mentioned most often arts as a means of expression (not as performance) and humility when identifying “gifted” individuals. In an African American community, representatives mentioned selfless service to community and handiwork most. In an American Indian settlement, residents declined to identify anyone as gifted, since they did not believe in standing out, although they respected individuals who could be comfortable in both white and Indian cultures “without assimilating.” Adaptability was most highly valued by recent Asian immigrants, who often mentioned the importance of education in the United States in that regard. In a low-income white community, both adults and high school students placed the highest value on nurturing of children and service to others. Overall, participants from the nonmainstream cultures valued “nonbookish” wisdom, not knowledge. It is important to recognize that the cultural values of one group are not better or worse than others, just different. Your group might find it interesting that all cultures do not necessarily value, and thrive in, a highly competitive school culture that demands intelligence and talents be demonstrated.

**(Right Column) teaching**

③ Have the students list on paper their personal strengths—what they can count on, have confidence in, or trust about themselves, both as they interact with others and when they are alone (read the following list, if needed). You might ask, “What do other people value in you?” Encourage them to share their lists. Tell the students they will need to speak or write about themselves with confidence during job interviews, on scholarship applications, and in college-application essays. Students whose cultures value humility, rather than self-promotion, may find this exercise difficult. Acknowledge potential cultural differences, but without making assumptions. U.S.-dominant-culture teens may not have considered that some cultures do not value standing out.

- |               |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| organized     | a good listener               |
| responsible   | kind                          |
| compassionate | energetic                     |
| personable    | even-tempered                 |
| patient       | an eager learner              |
| athletic      | a good dancer                 |
| helpful       | not moody                     |
| intelligent   | good sense of humor           |
| witty         | verbal or mathematical skills |

② What are the common expectations at your school for the “Gifted Teacher”?

③ What characteristics should a teacher of the gifted have?

**(Left Column) Identity**

mechanical gifts                      musical or other artistic talent  
good with elderly people and/or young children

**Important**

Teens usually are willing to share their lists, even when the group is just beginning. Contributions help build a group. However, remind the group that they always have the right to "pass" if uncomfortable about responding to a question or participating in an activity.

⑤ Connect these -  
Left to Right Column.  
Are there similar characteristics that you have?

④ Have the students list on paper their characteristics, habits, and flaws that the following list, if needed). List more limitations than the group for opinions about why

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- Encour
- strengt
- this mi
- unmoti
- spreadi
- impatie
- messy
- trouble
- naive

⑥ What do you bring to the profession (teaching gifted students)?  
What are you proud of?  
What do you want to enhance or improve?

- trouble with authority
- not a team player
- bossy
- easily distracted
- self-critical
- impulsive

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⑦ Closure.  
A statement of strength, "I am..."

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quality. Others believe there are  
*Theory of Multiple Intelligences*  
ntifies several intelligences,  
he "Thirteen Intelligence  
ank the items, according to  
strong in, as well as at least  
sheet lists more intelligences  
o generate discussion of  
ot necessarily intelligences,

ing active listening, divide the  
t something they enjoy or are  
board (for example, What do  
it? Could it turn into a career?  
you?). Then each student tells  
g interest. Finally, ask students  
r partner showed interest—

- how they showed they were interested and how their partner showed interest—even without talking.
- 6. For closure, ask the students which strengths and limitations were common in the group. Then ask, "How did it feel to talk about your strengths and limitations?" If you included the partnering activity, ask the group how they felt during it. If you used activity sheets, dispose of them or add them to group folders.