

Characteristics of Highly Capable Students

Washington State defines highly capable students as those “who perform or show potential for performing at significantly advanced academic levels compared with others of their age, experiences or environments. Outstanding abilities are seen within students’ general intellectual aptitude, specific academic abilities, and/or creative productivities within a specific domain. These students are present not only in the general education populace but are present in all protected classes...”

The purpose of identification for Highly Capable Program services is to find students whose potential and/or performance is significant enough to require modification in their instructional program. Use the following lists of characteristics to identify and refer students during the referral process.

Learning Characteristics: Highly Capable Students...	
Perform approximately 1.5 years or higher than their peers	Speak and write directly and to the point
Use unusually large vocabulary and complex sentence structure for age; possess high verbal ability	Like to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations
Demonstrate advanced comprehension of word nuances, metaphors, and abstract ideas (the subtleties of language)	Articulate ideas and communicate well with others; can find various ways of expressing ideas so others will understand
Put ideas or things together that are not typical	Grasp the relationship of individual steps to a whole process
Transfer learning from one situation to another	Retain a great deal of information
Organize data and information to discover mathematical patterns	Demonstrate strong critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills
Have creative (unusual or divergent) ways to solve math problems	Learn and acquire skills more quickly and with less practice
Display a strong number sense (e.g., makes sense of large and small numbers, estimates easily and appropriately)	Ask extensive or unusual questions
Frequently solve math problems abstractly, without the need for manipulatives or concrete materials	Demonstrate thinking that is abstract, complex, logical, and insightful; exhibit flexible thinking
Regularly use a variety of representations to explain math concepts (written explanations, pictorial, graphic, equations, etc.)	Read a great deal, usually preferring adult level books; does not avoid difficult materials; may show a preference for biography, autobiography, encyclopedias, and atlases
Enjoy solving problems, especially with numbers and puzzles	Elaborate well
Demonstrate an understanding of complicated material through analytical reasoning ability	Reveal originality in oral and other forms of expression (such as music, dance, drama, drawing, playing)
Have rapid insight into cause-effect relationships; tries to discover the how and why of things	Demonstrate the ability to generate a large number of ideas, alternatives, or solutions to problems or questions; exhibits flexible thinking
Have quick recall and mastery of information	Can support beliefs with data

Characteristics of Work Ethics: Highly Capable Students...

Become absorbed and truly involved in certain topics or problems; are sometimes difficult to move on to another topic	Prefer to work independently; require little direction from teachers
Are easily bored with routine tasks	Demonstrate tenacity when posed with challenges
Finish work very quickly and with high accuracy	Strive toward high quality in written and oral work
Are highly self-motivated and self-initiating; might seek out opportunities to learn on their own	Like to engage in class discussions and offer opinions that are appropriately related to the topic
Persistently work on tasks even when setbacks occur; seek task completion	Demonstrate a commitment to long-term projects when interested in a topic
Are high risk-takers	Have an unusual alertness
Thrive in problem situations; usually select more difficult tasks	Have keen powers of observation
Consistently turn in assignments on time	Possess a passion for particular topics
Have strong attendance	Organize their work well

Characteristics of Creativity: Highly Capable Students...

Are interested in experimenting and doing things differently	Might produce work that provokes a lively audience response
Are adventurous and speculative	Are innovative
Display a good deal of intellectual playfulness; fantasize and imagine ("I wonder what would happen if...")	May break rules or conventions to create a powerful new statement
Demonstrate more than one way to solve a problem; sometimes have creative solutions	Are concerned with adapting, improving and modifying institutions, objects, and systems
Are preoccupied with own thoughts; tend to daydream	Have a wide range of interests
Have a highly developed curiosity; ask extensive or unusual questions	Have a keen and/or unusual sense of humor
Possess a vivid imagination	Possess a sense of wonder

Social Emotional Characteristics: Highly Capable Students...

Prefer adults	Are independent
Demonstrate understanding of idealism and a sense of justice from an early age; have concerns with social and political issues and injustices	May have problems with friendships; may be isolated due to lack of intellectual peers or students with similar interests
Have a nonconforming attitude, do not fear being different	Are highly sensitive towards self and others
Possess deep, intense feelings, opinions, and reactions	Show little patience for routine procedures and drills
Demonstrate cooperative behavior when working with others; exhibit leadership abilities	Have a high degree of common sense
May mature at different rates than same-age peers	Are highly self-critical

Characteristics of Culturally Diverse (Linguistics & Economics): Highly Capable Students...

Are reading above grade level in their native language and in English	Demonstrate a strong sense of altruism (i.e., caring for others)
Show high ability in mathematics	Are willing to translate for others
Are advanced in creative domains (fluency, elaboration, originality, and flexibility)	Have superior knowledge of phrases and heritage dialects; have the ability to translate meanings in English
Are leaders in multiple settings (playground, home, clubs, etc.)	Have a grasp of jokes and puns related to cultural differences
Demonstrate language proficiency levels that are above general education students who are also ELL	Balance behaviors expected in both their heritage and the new culture
Learn multiple languages at an accelerated pace	Are willing to share their heritage or culture
Show the ability to code switch (alternate between two or more languages within a single conversation)	Show a strong sense of pride in their culture and ethnic background
Demonstrate a global sense of community and respect for cultural differences	Demonstrate an ability to express emotions (not necessarily with words)
Have an ability to explain native dialect and idioms (e.g., play on words, slang)	Demonstrate a richness in the imagination through informal language
Demonstrate an above level proficiency of English language growth	Demonstrate a questioning orientation (i.e., strong curiosity and a tendency to ask many questions)
Demonstrate ease of adapting to new environments	Want to teach others words from their heritage language
Demonstrate a high degree of emotional responsiveness (i.e., spontaneity, openness, and ease in sharing feelings with others)	Demonstrate effective communication through expressive speech that is rich with imagery
Demonstrate an interest in cultures other than own	Demonstrate awareness of themselves as a capable learner
Demonstrate an independent nature	Demonstrate a keen sense of justice

Characteristics of Abilities in Students with Learning Difficulties: Highly Capable Students...

May struggle with basic skills and reading due to processing deficits	Sometimes appear immature due to use of anger, withdrawal, and/or crying in dealing with difficulties
Are sensitive towards own deficits	Require teacher support and feedback in deficit areas
Possess strong observational skills; may have deficits in memory skills	Have high verbal ability but problems with written language; may use language inappropriately
May emerge as leaders among less traditional students but deficits may also impact leadership abilities	May have problems with friends due to poor social skills
Frequently have problems with concentration but in areas of interest, they are able to focus for long periods of time	Have strong critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills
Are often unwilling to take academic risks; may take risks in non-school-related areas without considering consequences	Have wide interests but deficits may hinder the ability to follow them
Have an unusual imagination	Have a passion for particular topics to the exclusion of others
May need compensatory strategies to ease the learning; may engage in antisocial behaviors; are generally sensitive to the feelings of others	May appear to be loners since they do not represent a typical model of giftedness or ability
Can be more independent in areas of interest	May appear stubborn and inflexible
May demonstrate "street smarts"	Are extremely divergent in thinking
Can be critical of self and others	Generate original but sometimes "bizarre" ideas
Excel in solving "real world" problems	Have non-school-related interests