

Nature and Needs of Gifted Learners

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The child who . . .

shows superior reasoning powers and marked ability to handle ideas

can solve problems quickly and easily

shows persistent intellectual curiosity and asks searching questions

shows exceptional interest in the nature of humankind and the universe

has a wide range of interests; develops one or more interests to considerable depth

has an advanced vocabulary

is an avid reader

may also be the child who . . .

is impatient; seems stuck-up or arrogant; challenges your authority; has difficulty getting along with less able peers

wants to move on quickly to more challenging problems, despite what the rest of the class is doing; hates to "wait for the group"; gets bored and frustrated

drives you crazy with questions; asks inappropriate or embarrassing questions; is perceived as "nosy"

has difficulty focusing on ideas that are less grand and sweeping; feels that everyday class work is trivial and meaningless; can't "connect" with interests of age peers

seems scattered and disorganized; takes on too many projects at once; gets obsessed with a particular interest; resists direction or interruption; rebels against conforming to group tasks; disrupts class routines; is perceived as stubborn or uncooperative

talks too much; uses words to intimidate other people; finds it hard to communicate with age peers; seems pompous or conceited—a "show-off"; plays word games that others don't understand or appreciate; dominates discussions; has trouble listening

buries himself or herself in books and avoids social interaction

continued . . .

The child who . . .**may also be the child who . . .**

learns quickly; comprehends readily	gets bored with the regular curriculum; gets impatient with peers for being "slow"; resists assignments that don't present opportunities for new learning; dislikes drill and practice; does inaccurate or sloppy work
grasps mathematical concepts readily	has little or no patience for regular math lessons or homework
is creative and imaginative	goes too far; seems disruptive; lacks interest in mundane assignments or details; wanders off the subject
sustains concentration for lengthy periods of time	has tunnel vision; hates to be interrupted; neglects regular assignments or responsibilities; is stubborn
shows outstanding responsibility and independence	has difficulty working with others; resists following directions; seems bossy and disrespectful; is unable to accept help; is a nonconformist
sets high standards for self; is self-critical	sets unrealistically high goals; is perfectionistic; lacks tolerance for others' mistakes; fears failure; avoids taking risks or trying new things; becomes depressed
shows initiative and originality	resists going along with the crowd (or the class); is a loner
shows flexibility in thinking; considers problems from a number of viewpoints	has difficulty focusing on or finishing assignments; has trouble making decisions

continued . . .

The Ten Commandments . . .

. . . That Foster Elitism

(How Gifted Children Develop Feelings of Superiority)

- I. Thou shalt be told that boredom is part of life and that easy, redundant work must be tolerated.
- II. Thou shalt often hear classmates express frustration because the test was hard . . . when thou thought it was easy.
- III. Thou shalt procrastinate on long-term assignments until the day before they are due . . . and thou shalt turn them in and get A's.
- IV. Thou shalt hear classmates ask questions of thy teacher that thy teacher answered clearly yesterday.
- V. Thou shalt receive numerous telephone calls from classmates the night before a test asking how to solve a difficult problem.
- VI. Thou shalt consistently get good grades without having to work or study hard.

. . . That Foster Understanding

(How Gifted Children Develop Humility as They Develop Their Talents)

- I. Thou shalt regularly experience work that is relevant, stimulating, and challenging.
- II. Thou shalt have expectations placed upon thee that are in line with thy aptitude.
- III. Thou shalt learn that self-discipline, long-range planning, and hard work are necessary before thou canst produce quality work.
- IV. Thou shalt have the opportunity to hear thy classmates ask questions of thy teacher and thyself that are hard questions—questions which require deep thought and careful consideration.
- V. Thou shalt find it necessary to occasionally phone thy classmates to ask for their help and perspective.
- VI. Thou shalt work hard to earn thy good grades—and come to realize that the excellence of thy work and the quality of thy ideas are more important than grades.

continued . . .

VII. Thou shalt know the answer to every question the teacher asks . . . and can answer the questions no one else can.

VIII. Thou shalt have thyself, thy grades, and thy work held up, by thy teacher, as examples to be emulated.

IX. Thou shalt be chosen first by the team captain for spelling, math, and geography bees.

X. In short, thou shalt have ample opportunity to believe that aptitude is equated with human value and that if thou art smarter, thou art better.

VII. Thou shalt experience humility as questions are raised by thy teacher and thy classmates—questions to which thou dost not know the answer (and of which thou never thought).

VIII. Thou shalt, through associations and discussions with thy classmates, come to appreciate that talents come in many forms and that no one talent is more valuable than another.

IX. Thou shalt come to realize that thou, too, hast both strengths and weaknesses, as do other students.

X. In short, through a diversity of experiences with thy classmates and teachers, thou shalt come to a fuller and richer understanding of every person's worth. Thou shalt come to realize that human value and intellectual aptitude can never be equated.

Adapted from Bruce A. Clair's "The Ten Commandments," *Gifted Child Today* (September/October 1985).

More Myths and Misconceptions

"Gifted education is elitist" is just one of several myths and misconceptions about giftedness. Here are more you'll doubtless encounter—and rebuttals you might find useful.

Myth: Gifted kids have it made and will succeed in life no matter what. They don't need any special services or help in school or anywhere else.

What a Perfectionist Thinks

- "If I can't do it perfectly, what's the point?"
- "I should excel at everything I do."
- "I always have to stay ahead of others."
- "I should finish a job before doing anything else."
- "Every detail of a job should be perfect."
- "Things should be done right the first time."
- "There is only one right way to do things."
- "I'm a wonderful person if I do well; I'm a lousy person if I do poorly."
- "I'm never good enough."
- "I'm stupid."
- "I can't do anything right."
- "I'm unlikable."
- "I'd better not make a mistake here, or people will think I'm not very [smart, good, capable]."
- "If I goof up, something's wrong with me."
- "People shouldn't criticize me."
- "Everything should be clearly black or white. Grays are a sign of confused thinking."

How a Perfectionist Feels

- Deeply embarrassed about mistakes she makes
- Disgusted or angry with herself when she is criticized
- Anxious when stating her opinion to others
- Extremely worried about details
- Angry if her routine is interrupted
- Nervous when things around her are messy
- Fearful or anxious a lot of the time
- Exhausted and unable to relax
- Plagued by self-hatred
- Afraid of appearing stupid
- Afraid of appearing incompetent
- Afraid of being rejected
- Ashamed of having fears
- Discouraged
- Guilty about letting others down

Adapted from "Perfectionism at a Glance" in *Freeing Our Families from Perfectionism* by Thomas S. Greenspon, Ph.D. (Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 2002), pp. 9-10. Used with permission.

PROFILES OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Authors: George Betts and Maureen Neihart

Source: Gifted Child Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 2, Spring 1988

Type I – "The Successful"

Perhaps as many as 90% of identified gifted students in school programs are Type I's. Children who demonstrate the behavior, feelings, and needs classified as Type I's have learned the system. They have listened closely to their parents and teachers. After discovering what "sells" at home and at school, they begin to display appropriate behavior. They learn well and are able to score high on achievement tests and tests of intelligence. As a result, they are usually identified for placement in programs for the gifted. Rarely do they exhibit behavior problems because they are eager for approval from teachers, parents and other adults.

These are the children many believe will "make it on their own." However, Type I's often become bored with school and learn to use the system in order to get by with as little effort as possible. Rather than pursue their own interests and goals in school, they tend to go through the motions of schooling, seeking structure and direction from instructors. They are dependent upon parents and teachers. They fail to learn needed skills and attitudes for autonomy, but they do achieve. Overall, these children may appear to have positive self-concepts because they have been affirmed for their achievements. They are liked by peers and are included in social groups. They are dependent on the system but are not aware that they have deficiencies because of the reinforcement they receive from adults who are pleased with them and their achievement. However, Goertzel and Goertzel (1962) concluded that the brightest children in the classroom may become competent but unimaginative adults who do not fully develop their gifts and talents. It seems that these children have lost both their creativity and autonomy.

Gifted young adults who may underachieve in college and later adulthood come from this group. They do not possess the necessary skills, concepts, and attitudes necessary for life-long learning. They are well adjusted to society but are not well prepared for the ever-changing challenges of life.

Profile of Type I

Feelings and Attitudes	Behaviors	Needs	Adults/Peer Perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Boredom -Dependent -Positive self-concept -Anxious -Guilty about failure -Extrinsic motivation -Responsible for others -Diminish feelings of self and rights to their emotion -Self critical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Perfectionist -High Achiever -Seeks teacher approval and structure -Non-risk taking -Does well academically -Accepts & conforms -Dependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To see their own deficiencies -To be challenged -Assertiveness skills -Autonomy -Help with boredom -Appropriate curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Loved by teachers -Admired by peers -Loved and accepted by parents
Identification	Home Support	School Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grade point average -IQ Tests -Teacher nominations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Independence -Ownership -Freedom to make choices -Time for personal interests -Risk taking experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accelerated and enriched curriculum -Time for personal interests -Compacted learning experiences -Opportunities to be with intellectual peers -Development of independent learning skills -In-depth studies -Mentorships -College & career counseling 	

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Type II – "The Challenging"

Type II's are the divergently gifted. Many school systems fail to identify Type II gifted children for programs unless the programs have been in place at least five years and substantial servicing has been done with teachers. Type II's typically possess a high degree of creativity and may appear to be obstinate, tactless, or sarcastic. They often question authority and may challenge the teacher in front of the class. They do not conform to the system, and they have not learned to use it to their advantage. They receive little recognition and few rewards or honors. Their interactions at school and at home often involve conflict.

These children feel frustrated because the school system has not affirmed their talents and abilities. They are struggling with their self-esteem. They may or may not feel included in the social group. Some Type II's also challenge their peers, and therefore are often not included or welcomed in activities or group projects; on the other hand, some Type II's have a sense of humor and creativity that is very appealing to peers. Nevertheless their spontaneity may be disruptive in the classroom. In spite of their creativity, Type II's often possess negative self-concepts.

Type II's may be "at risk" as eventual dropouts for drug addiction or delinquent behavior if appropriate interventions are not made by junior high. Parents of gifted high school students who drop out of school (Type IV) frequently note that their children exhibited Type II behaviors in upper elementary school or junior high. Although this relationship has not been validated empirically, it carries significant implications that merit serious consideration.

Profile of Type II

Feelings and Attitudes	Behaviors	Needs	Adults/Peer Perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Boredom -Frustration -Low self-esteem -Impatient -Defensive -Heightened sensitivity -Uncertain about social roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Corrects teacher -Questions rules, policies -Is honest, direct -Has mood swings -Demonstrates inconsistent work habits -Has poor self control -Is creative -Prefers highly active & questioning approach -Stands up for convictions -Is competitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To be connected with others -To learn tact, flexibility, self-awareness, self control, acceptance -Support for creativity -Contractual systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Find them irritating -Rebellious -Engaged in power struggle -See them as creative -Discipline problem -Peers see them as entertaining -Want to change them -Don't view as gifted
Identification	Home Support	School Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Peer Recommendations -Parent nomination -Interviews -Performance -Recommendation from a significant, non-related adult -Creativity Testing -Teacher advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acceptance and understanding -Allow them to pursue interest -Advocate for them at school -Modeling appropriate behavior -Family projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tolerance -Placement with appropriate teacher -Cognitive & social skill development -Direct and clear communication with child -Give permission for feelings -Studies in-depth -Mentorships build self-esteem -Behavioral contracting 	

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Type III – "The Underground"

The Type III gifted child is known as "the underground gifted." Generally, these are middle school females although males may also want to hide their giftedness. If a gifted boy goes underground, it tends to happen later, in high school, and typically in response to the pressure to participate in athletics.

In general, Type III's are gifted girls whose belonging needs rise dramatically in middle school (Kerr, 1985). They begin to deny their talent in order to feel more included with a non-gifted peer group. Students who are highly motivated and intensely interested in academic or creative pursuits may undergo an apparently sudden radical transformation, losing all interest in previous passions. Type III's frequently feel insecure and anxious. Their changing needs are often in conflict with the expectations of teachers and parents. All too often, adults react to them in ways that only increase their resistance and denial. There is a tendency to push these children, to insist that they continue with their educational program no matter how they feel. Type III's often seem to benefit from being accepted as they are at the time.

Although Type III's should not be permitted to abandon all projects or advanced classes, alternatives should be explored for meeting their academic needs while they are undergoing this transition. Challenging resistant adolescents may alienate them from those who can help meet their needs and long-term goals.

Profile of Type III

Feelings and Attitudes	Behaviors	Needs	Adults/Peer Perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unsure -Pressured -Confused -Guilty -Insecure -Diminished feelings of self and right to their emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Denies talent -Drops out of G/T and advanced classes -Resists challenges -Wants to belong socially -Changes friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Freedom to make choices -To be aware of conflicts -Awareness of feelings -Support for abilities -Involvement with gifted peers -Career/college info -Self-acceptance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Viewed as leaders or unrecognized -Seen as average and successful -Perceived to be compliant -Seen as quiet/shy -Adults see them as unwilling to risk -Viewed as resistive
Identification	Home Support	School Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Gifted peer nomination -Home nomination -Community nomination -Achievement testing -IQ Tests -Performance -Teacher advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acceptance of underground -Provide college & career planning experiences -Time to be with same age peers -Provide gifted role models -Model life-long learning -Give freedom to make choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recognize & properly place -Give permission to take time out from G/T classes -Provide same sex role models -Continue to give college & career information 	

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Type IV – “The Dropout”

Type IV gifted students are angry. They are angry with adults and with themselves because the system has not met their needs for many years and they feel rejected. They may express this anger by acting depressed and withdrawn or by acting out and responding defensively. Frequently, Type IV's have interests that lie outside the realm of the regular school curriculum and they fail to receive support and affirmation for their talent and interest in these unusual areas. School seems irrelevant and perhaps hostile to them. For the most part, Type IV's are high school students, although occasionally there may be an elementary student who attends school sporadically or only on certain days and has in essence "dropped out" emotionally and mentally if not physically.

Type IV students are frequently gifted children who were identified very late, perhaps not until high school. They are bitter and resentful as a result of feeling rejected and neglected. Their self-esteem is very low, and they require a close working relationship with an adult they can trust. Traditional programming is no longer appropriate for Type IV's. Family counseling is strongly recommended, and the Type IV youth should also be given individual counseling. Diagnostic testing is also necessary to identify possible areas for remediation.

Profile of Type IV

Feelings and Attitudes	Behaviors	Needs	Adults/Peer Perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Resentment -Angry -Depressed -Explosive -Poor self-concept -Defensive -Burn-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has intermittent attendance -Doesn't complete tasks -Pursues outside interests -"Spaced out" in class -Is self-abusive -Isolates self -Is creative -Criticizes self & others -Does inconsistent work -Is disruptive, acts out -Seems average or below -Is defensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An individualized program -Intense support -Alternatives (separate, new opportunities) -Counseling (individual, group, and family) -Remedial help with skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Adults are angry with them -Peers are judgmental -Seen as loners, dropouts, dopers, or air heads -Reject them and ridicule -Seen as dangerous and rebellious
Identification	Home Support	School Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Review cumulative folder -Interview earlier teachers -Discrepancy between IQ and demonstrated achievement incongruities and inconsistencies in performance -Creativity testing -Gifted peer recommendation -Demonstrated performance in non-school areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seek counseling for family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diagnostic testing -Group counseling for young students -Nontraditional study skills -In-depth studies -Mentorships -Alternative out of classroom learning experiences -G.E.D. 	

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Type V – "The Double-Labeled"

Type V refers to gifted children who are physically or emotionally handicapped in some way, or who have learning disabilities. The vast majority of gifted programs do not identify these children, nor do they offer differentiated programming that addresses and integrates their special needs. Fortunately, research on the effective identification of these children has been promising, and suggestions do exist for ways to provide programming alternatives (Daniels, 1983; Fox, Brody, & Tobin, 1983; Gunderson, Maesch, & Rees, 1988; Maker, 1977; and Whitmore & Maker, 1985).

Type V students often do not exhibit behaviors that schools look for in the gifted. They may have sloppy handwriting or disruptive behaviors that make it difficult for them to complete work, and they often seem confused about their inability to perform school tasks. They show symptoms of stress; they may feel discouraged, frustrated, rejected, helpless, or isolated.

These children may deny that they are having difficulty by claiming that activities or assignments are "boring" or "stupid." They may use their humor to demean others in order to bolster their own lagging self-esteem. They urgently want to avoid failures and are unhappy about not living up to their own expectations. They may be very skilled at intellectualization as a means of coping with their feelings of inadequacy. They are often impatient and critical and react stubbornly to criticism.

Traditionally, these students are either ignored because they are perceived as average or referred for remedial assistance. School systems tend to focus on their weaknesses and fail to nurture their strengths or talents.

Profile of Type V

Feelings and Attitudes	Behaviors	Needs	Adults/Peer Perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Powerless -Frustrated -Low self-esteem -Unaware -Angry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Demonstrates inconsistent work -Seems average or below -May be disruptive or acts out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Emphasis on strengths -Coping skills -G/T support group -Counseling -Skill development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Seen as "weird" -Seen as "dumb" -Viewed as helpless -Avoided by peers -Seen as average or below in ability -Perceived to require a great deal of imposed structure -Seen only for the disability
Identification	Home Support	School Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Scatter of 11 points or more on WISC or WAIS -Recommendation of significant others -Recommendation from informed special ed. teacher -Interview -Performance -Teacher Advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recognize gifted abilities -Challenge them -Provide risk-taking opportunities -Advocate for child at school -Do family projects -Seek counseling for family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Placement in gifted program -Provide needed resources -Provide alternative learning experiences -Begin investigations and explorations -Give time to be with peers -Give individual counseling 	

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Type VI – “The Autonomous Learner”

The Type VI gifted child is the autonomous learner. Few gifted children demonstrate this style at a very early age although parents may see evidence of the style at home. Like the Type I's, these students have learned to work effectively in the school system. However, unlike the Type I's who strive to do as little as possible, Type VI's have learned to use the system to create new opportunities for themselves. They do not work for the system; they make the system work for them. Type VI's have strong, positive self-concepts because their needs are being met; they are successful, and they receive positive attention and support for their accomplishments as well as for who they are. They are well respected by adults and peers and frequently serve in some leadership capacity within their school or community.

Type VI students are independent and self-directed. They feel secure designing their own educational and personal goals. They accept themselves and are able to take risks. An important aspect of the Type VI is their strong sense of personal power. They realize they can create change in their own lives, and they do not wait for others to facilitate change for them. They are able to express their feelings, goals, and needs freely and appropriately.

Profile of Type VI

Feelings and Attitudes	Behaviors	Needs	Adults/Peer Perceptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Placement in gifted program -Provide needed resources -Provide alternative learning experiences -Begin investigations and explorations -Give time to be with peers -Give individual counseling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Has appropriate social skill -Works independently -Develops own goals -Follows through -Works without approval -Follows strong areas of passion -Is creative -Stands up for convictions -Takes risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advocacy -Feedback -Facilitation -Support for risks -Appropriate opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Accepted by peers and adults -Admired for abilities -Seen as capable and responsible by parents -Positive influences -Successful -Psychologically healthy
Identification	Home Support	School Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grade point average -Demonstrated performance -Products -Achievement Testing -Interviews -Teacher/Peer/Parent self nominations -IQ tests -Creativity Testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Advocate for child at school and in community -Provide opportunities related to passions -Allow friends of all ages -Remove time and space restrictions -Do family projects -Include child in parent's passion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Allow development of long-term integrated plan of study -Accelerated and enriched curriculum -Remove time and space restrictions -Compacted learning experiences with pretesting -In-depth studies -Mentorships -College & career counseling and opportunities -Dual enrollment or early admission -Waive traditional school policy and regulations 	

Profile #1

ALONZO

Alonzo hummed cheerfully to himself with an elfish grin as he quickly worked subtraction problems on the first grade paper. Considered small for six years old, he could barely touch the floor with his toes, and his skinny little legs swung rapidly to the beat of his humming as his shoes made a swishing sound when they rubbed against the floor tile. A prissy long-haired girl gave Alonzo several dirty looks and three verbal reprimands before reporting to the teacher, "Alfonzo is making a lot of noise and I can't do my math." Alonzo looked at the teacher and produced a wide toothless smile, and said, "I'm making a song about cooking cabrito (goat). Do you want to hear it?"

Sure enough, Alfonzo had been creating a song as he worked the mundane problems on his paper. The song was quite graphic, and described not only the killing of the goat, but also the meat preparation, eating of the goat, and family celebration that followed the meal. Alfonzo even created a yell as a grand culmination of his composition.

Alfonzo loved add-on stories in the classroom and always dreamed up an unusual twist when it was his turn to add to the story. During art activities, Alfonzo asked for materials that were not provided to enhance his creations. One day, Alfonzo asked me if the class could play a new game he had created. As one can imagine, Alfonzo's game involved lots of noise and movement, including climbing, jumping, and singing.

Alfonzo's home language is Spanish, and most of his creativity is reflected in his native language and culture.

Alfonzo's family moved away for work two months ago and Alfonzo has just returned. His records from his other school indicate that he had deficits in many areas including language and reading. In addition, his records indicate that he was a discipline problem. Alfonzo has been quieter than before and has started withdrawing from activities he previously enjoyed.

Profile #2

HELEN

As an eleventh grader, Helen appears to be comfortable with school. She admits she does not have trouble getting along with other kids, but laughs and says she just doesn't have much to do with them. Other people at school just don't have the same interests; all they want to do is get out of school as quickly as possible, get a job, and live some sort of inane existence. Most of them are just interested in going partying or getting drunk on a Friday night.

Helen calls herself introspective. She believes in solving things herself. She loves learning stuff that is mentally stimulating. Helen hates it at school when she can't understand something. She grills the teachers until she gets the answer. English freaks her out because there are so many interpretations and she doesn't ever know whether is right or wrong. Science and math are better because they are precise.

Both of Helen's parents are teachers and she feels she is a disappointment to them. Her mother was a cheerleader in high school and extremely outgoing. Both parents were active in student government and notably popular.

Helen spent her tenth grade year of high school in France. Now when she gets angry at her parents or others, she just swears a lot in French or locks herself in her room.

Profile #3

ALYSSA

Alyssa is seven. She loves school, her friends, and her family. Just recently, she played a main part in the school play. Her performance was flawless even though she had lines and cues that were exceptionally challenging for any child of her age. Her parents and grandparents were there to videotape the whole thing.

At school, Alyssa is extremely popular. Her teacher acknowledges her talents and gifts, but is frustrated by the way Alyssa seems to control the whole class. When working in groups in the classroom, group members refuse to act and participate with Alyssa's consent. What is most frustrating is that her control should be a turn-off, yet, the kids in the classroom all seem to only want to work with Alyssa. During lunch and recess, all of the second grade kids flock around her. This frustrates the teacher because Alyssa is not always nice to other children. The teacher has caught her in several lies and she tends to be manipulative and teases the children with mean insults. When the teacher addressed her concern about Alyssa's mean behavior to her parents at the beginning of the year, her parents became defensive and insinuated that maybe the teacher was jealous because Alyssa seemed to hold more control over the classroom environment than the teacher.

A couple of days ago, Alyssa's teacher found two girls crying under a tree. Alyssa had told the girls to sit under a tree during lunch and recess because they were stupid and ugly and could not hang around her and her friends. The teacher called a conference, and after attending the parent conference concerning Alyssa's behavior, Alyssa's parents requested that Alyssa be moved to another classroom. They believe that leaving Alyssa in her current class will hinder Alyssa's positive self-esteem as the teacher obviously does not like their daughter.

Profile #4

ALEX

Alex is thirteen. He hates school and everything about it. It seems that Alex is nothing but a disappointment to his parents and his teachers. About the only people that really like him are his friends. They are great. When Alex is with his friends he can keep everyone laughing and having a good time.

Alex was grounded for life last week. Report cards came out and he had a 95 in physical education. All of his other grades were below 75.

Alex was put in gifted classes when he was in the third grade. At this time he made wonderful grades. Since then, he has not done so well. None of his friends are in gifted classes and Alex is embarrassed when one of his friends finds out he is a "geek."

Mrs. Smith, his English teacher, has really been on his back lately. She keeps insisting that he is brilliant and she can't understand why he is determined to ruin his life the way he is. Just yesterday, he spoke up for himself, "What do you know about life? All you are is a teacher! I'm only thirteen - get off my back!" Mrs. Smith just sighed. Nothing happened. Maybe he ought to do this to his parents. They might leave him along just like Mrs. Smith is doing now.

Profile #5

JADA

Jada came home and slammed her book bag on the kitchen table. She barked at her mother, "We have to do a project today for history that explains the importance of going back in time and looking at our past. We have to present this in an "unusual" manner. I hate Mr. Gomez! Why can't I just do the work in the book?"

Jada is a twelve-year old sixth grader. She loves school and seems to have many friends. She is one of two children. Jada's older brother is in high school and loves loud music. This is Jada's biggest complaint because they live in a small apartment and it is hard to find a place that is peaceful and quiet.

Jada's teachers all refer to her as the perfect student. Jada boasts that she has never received anything lower than an A in her entire life. She is always prepared, and loves to do things exactly as she is told. One of her teachers commented that she does not like to be given assignments that ask her to go out on a limb. She is happiest when she is busy doing routine class work. She does special assignments that require creativity, but none of these are out of the ordinary and she usually shows a great deal of stress when one of these assignments are due. Jada has confided to the teacher that she hates having to do assignments that make her create her own ideas. It is much easier to read and report what other people have to say about things.

Jada's mother is proud of her daughter and displays her academic work on the walls and shelves of their small apartment. She readily admits that she was never a student and Jada's achievements leave her feeling inadequate as a parent. Jada has never asked for help with homework. Her mother is glad because Jada is learning things her mother could not help her with.

Next year, the school will be offering honors classes and Jada has just informed her counselor that she doesn't want to take any of them. She knows there will be nothing but extra work and more projects – the kind that require new and different ideas.

Profile #6

RYAN

Ryan is a gifted child who has a specific learning disability. He is a bright seven-year old with an IQ of 120. He can comprehend material written on a fifth grade level if read to him, and he is able to recite a litany of sophisticated scientific facts concerning reptiles and other creepy crawlers gleaned from a variety of scientific journals and the internet. His spoken vocabulary is comparable to boys twice his age, but Ryan is a functional non-reader. Ryan can name off the letters and tell the sound each makes, but he is at a total loss as how to use this information to decode all but the simplest of words. As a result he is repeating first grade.

Ryan's mother is extremely supportive and reads to Ryan constantly. His father, however, is furious that his son cannot read and blames the school for his son's lack of ability to read. He believes that if Ryan had a better first grade teacher, he would be reading. He does not buy into learning disabilities and is furious with his wife for signing papers that have given the school permission to serve him in the special education program.