Characteristics of Gifted Students

A defining characteristic of gifted students is the desire to be challenged to their full potential. Although gifted students often appear to be doing “just fine”, they benefit from activities that extend basic concepts and allow them to connect their personal interests to the curriculum. Students may be gifted in different areas and there is no one prescribed set of behaviors that indicate giftedness. Therefore, it is important for the classroom teacher to recognize the diverse behaviors of giftedness and realize that no student will exhibit all of these behaviors.

TYPICAL GIFTED BEHAVIORS

- Uses a large vocabulary
- Elaborates, discusses in detail
- Enjoys learning
- Thrives on complexity
- Is inquisitive and keenly observant
- Is widely read
- Is a self-starter
- Pursues interests with enthusiasm and vigor
- Enjoys creative tasks
- Has high expectations of self and others
- Assumes responsibility
- Is self-confident and organized
- Is an original thinker in oral and written expression
- Is excited about new ideas

ATYPICAL GIFTED BEHAVIORS

- May not be motivated by grades
- May seem to be off-task, disinterested, or bored
- Is reluctant to do rote assignments
- Questions everything, including authority
- May be self-critical and fear failure
- Exhibits “wild, off the wall” humor
- Tends to dominate others
- Overflows with ideas
- May prefer to work independently
- Appears stubborn
- Exhibits emotional sensitivity
- Tends to turn in messy papers
- Appears to be a slow starter
- Is reluctant to move to a new task

Motivating and Challenging Gifted Students

The first step in motivating and challenging gifted students is getting to know them. In order to better understand the interests and learning preferences of gifted students, teachers should administer interest and learning profile inventories. To plan appropriate, meaningful instruction, teachers must pre-assess students prior to introducing any new skill or concept. A variety of inventories and pre-assessment techniques are available at http://education.fcps.org/AdvancedAcademics, under Instructional Strategies. Teachers are encouraged to use flexible groupings and differentiation strategies to motivate and challenge gifted students. The Enrichment Specialist, where available, can assist teachers in planning and implementing learning activities that meet the needs of gifted learners.

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES:

- Promote creative and critical thinking as well as research, planning, and decision-making skills
- Allow students to work at an appropriate pace
- Recognize prior knowledge and eliminate boredom by minimizing repetition
- Increase independence, motivation and class participation
- Offer acceleration, rigor and the challenge of working with complex, abstract ideas
- Allow students to make choices and explore personal interests

GIFTED STUDENTS:

- Require rigor
- Seek challenge
- Prefer choice
- Enjoy open-ended activities
- Need outlets for creativity