

**Special Interest
Articles:**

- Do You Have A Gifted Child?
- How To Tell If Your Child's Gifted

Do You Have A Gifted Child?

By Hana R. Alberts

On what point can all experts in gifted education agree? A gifted child can be talented across so many different areas that often you need to look hard to find him or her. But one thing is clear--each is a truly extraordinary individual.

But there's a scale that psychologists and schools can use to screen students for entrance into gifted programs. Called the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students, this tool lists dozens of characteristics of gifted children under categories that range from leadership and communication to math to art and music. And, simplified, it can help every parent understand if they've produced a prodigy.

The scale is the product of Joseph S. Renzulli, a professor at the University of

Connecticut, and a team of experts who have field-tested the system on K-12 students throughout the United States. Now the results are in.

Compared with their same-age peers, gifted children may have superior memories, a knack for creating original skits or the ability to concentrate intensely for long periods of time--to cite just a few characteristics of the children inventoried in the test. And though teachers and other educational professionals administer the scales, experts say that parents play a crucial role in the initial recognition of giftedness in their own children.

"Parents are a key, perhaps *the* key, in identifying gifted children," says Dr. James T. Webb, co-author of *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*. "Their child is very curious, talks early and asks a lot of questions If they're into chess, that's all they want to do. If they have a tantrum, it's over-the-top. If they have an imaginary friend, they don't just have one or two. They have 10 or 11, and each has imaginary pets."

Judy Galbraith, a specialist in guidance and counseling of the gifted, recalls a time when her second-grade student brought *The Hobbit* to class. "At first, I was a little skeptical that he was comprehending it," she says. "But then he started to talk about what was happening, and the characters." Gifted children can read for long periods of time, and they often seek out books or magazines that are above their age or grade level. According to Galbraith, who wrote a book called *You Know Your Child Is Gifted When ...* to help parents navigate the overwhelming amount of research in the field, these kids can tear through several books a week.

"Keep in mind there are different levels of giftedness," advises Dr. Edward R. Amend, a clinical psychologist who co-authored *A Parent's Guide to Gifted Children*. Amend works with an 11-year-old who is currently taking an advanced topology class (that's way beyond calculus) at a local university after getting the highest grade in the prerequisite math class. "That's an extreme level of giftedness. It's more normal to be one year, or two or three or four, ahead of kids in his or her class," he adds. The issue becomes even

more complex in light of research that indicates kids can be gifted and learning disabled at the same time, says Webb. "Once you get up into the gifted range, particularly as you get into the upper reaches of the gifted range, you find an increasing span of abilities," he says. "You may have a child who is 8 years old, a second grader, who is reading at a seventh-grade level, does math at a fifth-grade level, has visual/motor skills at a third-grade level and decision/judgment skills at a second- or third-grade level."

Renzulli, who is also director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, warns parents that there is no such thing as the perfect identification system. It's important to remember that a child can still be gifted if he or she possesses just some--not all--of the listed characteristics in the scales.

"As we do more research, the list keeps getting longer." says