

The Gifted Preschooler –

Research on gifted children reveals that even in early childhood they display significant differences from the developmental patterns observable in age-peers of average ability.

Early development of exceptional verbal ability is often considered to be a sign or characteristic of giftedness. At age 2, an extensive vocabulary and agile use of language in a young gifted child will be remarkably evident. Freeman (1985) found young gifted children to be verbally precocious in three skill areas: talking, reading, and writing. This high verbal ability was found to be present as early as 3 years of age.

Gifted preschoolers are able to convey their ideas more easily to their peers, to communicate their feelings, and to give directions. Often you will find these children sought out by peers for companionship, ideas and decisions.

Kitano (1985) found that in addition to demonstrating high levels of accumulated knowledge and thinking abilities, preschool gifted children also showed evidence of pre-logical thinking, discomfort with ambiguity, creativity, and spontaneous incorporation of academic activities into free play. Perhaps as a reflection of the gifted child's greater language fluency, gifted preschoolers also talk about problems, rules, and goals to a greater extent than do their average ability peers.

Berninger and Abbott (1995) found that kindergarten-age children who showed signs of math precocity, indeed, had more complex reasoning skills and memory skills such as verbal reasoning skills, ability to remember complex information, and ability to decode other symbolic systems such as maps and written language.

Curiosity, concentration, memory, and a sense of humor are seen as areas of differentiation between gifted and non-gifted preschoolers. They may respond to riddles and verbal associations because of their ability to think quickly and see relationships more than peers of the same age.

One of the most outstanding characteristics of young gifted children is their high level of emotional sensitivity, which allows for the early development of values, empathy, and responsibility. Gifted preschoolers show more than average sharing and helping behaviors, more reactions to others' signs of distress, more sensitivity to the needs of others.

From the Harvard Preschool Project, B. White cited evidence for several intellectual abilities in preschool aged children:

1. sense discrepancies or differences in organized sequences and errors in logic
2. anticipate future events
3. deal with abstractions
4. take on the perspective of others
5. make interesting, original associations
6. plan and carry out complicated activities
7. use resources effectively
8. concentrate closely while still monitoring the surroundings