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CENTER

Helping Every Child Reach New Heights

*Helping children, adolescents and families realize their potential*

# Assessment of Gifted Children

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# Continuing Education Learning Objectives

- ▶ Participants will become familiar with fundamental concepts in the gifted field, specifically, how they are expressed in assessment.
- ▶ Participants will be educated on different levels and components of evaluations designed to appropriately address the need and questions to be answered.
- ▶ Participants will learn about evaluating and interpreting gifted, 2e, and complex neuropsychological profiles.
- ▶ Participants will learn about the importance of qualitative observation and interviewing as part of the testing process.
- ▶ Participants will learn about the importance of considering personality style in interpretation and planning.



# Assessment of Gifted Children

Didactics



# Comprehensive Evaluations Purpose



Provides a roadmap for making educational and parenting decisions based on a child's cognitive potential, academic achievement, personality characteristics, social, emotional, and behavioral functioning.

# Reasons for Seeking Evaluations

- ▶ Is my child gifted? How smart is he/she?
- ▶ Does my child have an attention issue?
- ▶ Does my child have a learning issue?
- ▶ Why isn't my child performing well in school?
- ▶ Why does my child have such strong emotional reactions?
- ▶ Why isn't she/he getting along with peers?
- ▶ Why is he/she so anxious? So sad?

## Factors Influencing the Expression of Giftedness

1. Level of Giftedness
2. Asynchronous Development
3. Dabrowski's Overexcitabilities
4. Thinking and Learning Styles

The higher the child's overall ability level, the more these variables influence the behaviors.

# What is Giftedness?

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), 2010

Gifted individuals are those who demonstrate outstanding levels of **aptitude** (defined as an exceptional ability to reason and learn) or **competence** (documented performance or achievement in top 10% or rarer) in one or more domains.

Domains include any structured area of activity with its own symbol system (e.g., mathematics, music, language) and/or set of sensorimotor skills (e.g., painting, dance, sports).

# What is Giftedness?

The Columbus Group, 1991

## Complex Beings

### Intensity, Sensitivity, and Overexcitability

Giftedness is **asynchronous** development in which advanced cognitive abilities and **heightened intensity** combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to **develop optimally**.

# What is Giftedness?

## Common characteristics of gifted youth

- ▶ rapid learners
- ▶ strong memory
- ▶ large vocabulary
- ▶ advanced comprehension of nuances
- ▶ largely self-taught
- ▶ unusual emotional depth
- ▶ abstract/complex/ logical/insightful thinking
- ▶ idealism and sense of justice
- ▶ intense feelings and reactions
- ▶ highly sensitive
- ▶ long attention span and persistence...

# What is Giftedness?

## Common characteristics of gifted youth

- ▶ preoccupied with own thoughts
- ▶ impatient with self and others' inabilities and slowness,
- ▶ asks probing questions (able to go beyond what is taught), wide range of interests,
- ▶ highly developed curiosity
- ▶ interest in experimenting and doing things differently
- ▶ divergent thinking
- ▶ keen and unusual sense of humor

# Giftedness: Identification

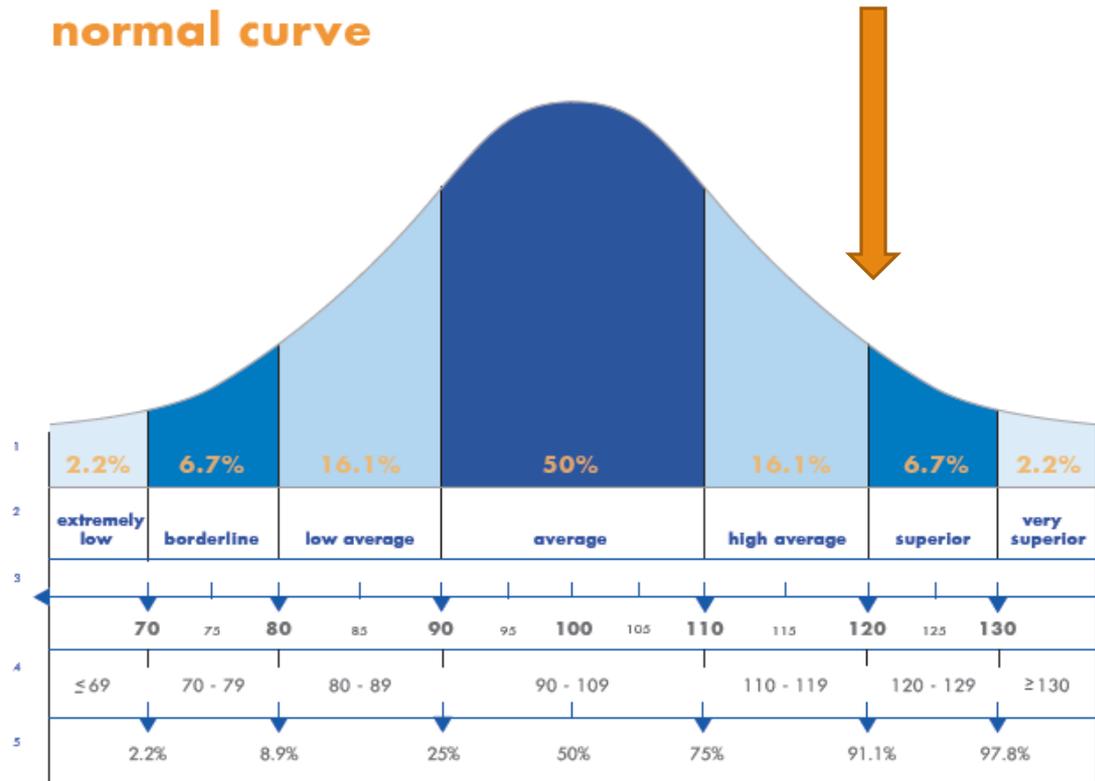
(Clark, Barbara, "**Growing Up Gifted**," 2008, p. 206)

- Multiple, domain-specific measures of giftedness and talent collected from multiple sources
  - Intellectual Ability (Intelligence tests)
  - Academic Achievement (General or specific)
  - Creative Ability (Divergent thinking tests: Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking)
  - Leadership Ability
  - Behavioral Checklists
  - Portfolios of completed work
  - Peer Review
  - Family History and Student Background

# Intellectual Ability

19

normal curve



- 1 percent of cases
- 2 qualitative description
- 3 score
- 4 composite score range
- 5 percentile rank

# Levels of Giftedness

<b>Level of Giftedness</b>	<b>Range</b>
Advanced Learners	120-129
Moderately Gifted	130-144
Highly Gifted	145-159
Exceptionally Gifted	160-179
Profoundly Gifted	180 +



# Asynchronous Development

- ▶ “Gifted children often have substantial variations in abilities within themselves and develop unevenly across various skill areas...This uneven pattern of behavior is called asynchronous development.”  
[Webb, Gore, Amend, DeVries, 2007, p. 7]

## Overexcitabilities (OEs)

- A greater capacity to be stimulated by and respond to external and internal stimuli.
- Overexcitability permeates a gifted person's existence...and gives energy to their intelligence, talents and personality.

# Overexcitabilities (OE's)

- **Psychomotor** - movement, strong drive, energy, extended bouts of activity
- **Intellectual** - insatiable curiosity, voracious appetite and capacity for intellectual effort and stimulation; mental activity is intensified and accelerated
- **Sensual** - heightened experiences of seeing, smelling, tasting, touching and hearing
- **Imaginational** - active imaginary and fantasy life
- **Emotional** - capacity for emotional depth, empathy, deeply feels own and others emotions

# Learning/Thinking Styles

## Auditory-Sequential

- Prefers verbal explanations; uses language to remember
- Processes information sequentially; deals with one task at a time
- Produces ideas logically; prefers analyzing activities

## Visual-Spatial

- Prefers visual explanations; uses images to remember
- Processes information holistically; deals with several tasks at a time
- Produces ideas intuitively; prefers synthesizing activities

## Learning/Thinking Styles (Continued)

### Auditory-Sequential

- Prefers concrete thinking tasks; likes structured experiences
- Prefers proper working materials and proper settings for working

### Visual-Spatial

- refers abstract thinking tasks; likes open, fluid experiences
- Improvises with materials available; creates own structure

## Learning/Thinking Styles (Continued)

### Auditory-Sequential

- Prefers to learn facts and details
- Approaches problems seriously

### Visual-Spatial

- Prefers to gain general overview
- Approaches problems playfully



# Risk Factors

- Underachievement
  - Social isolation
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Perfectionism
- 

# What does it mean to be Twice-Exceptional (2e)?

1. Children who are identified as gifted and talented in one or more areas of exceptionality (specific academics, general intellectual ability, creativity, leadership, or performing arts).

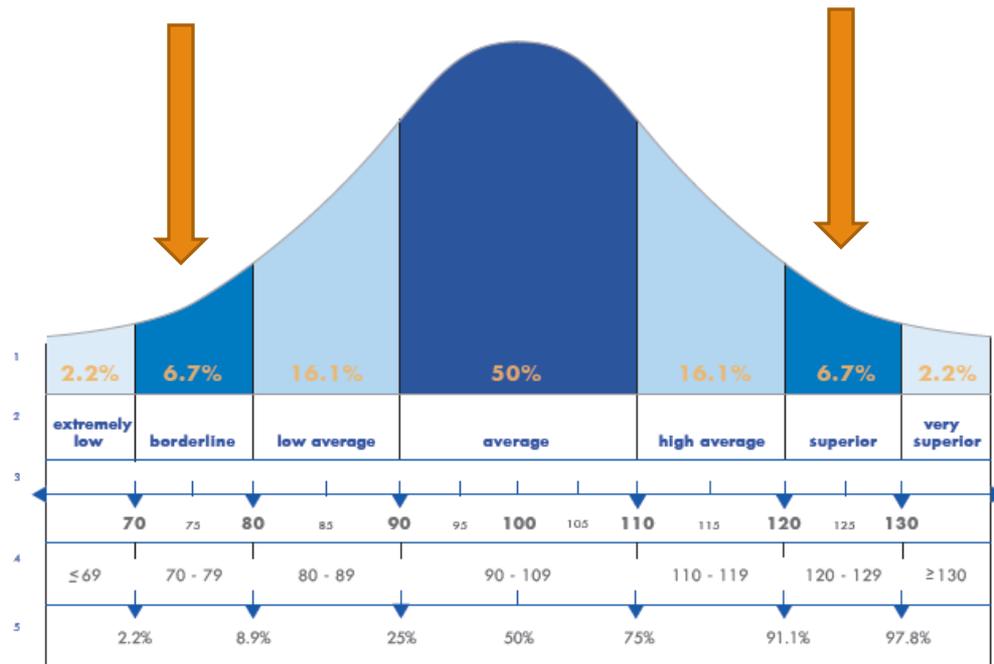
And also identified with:

2. A disability defined by Federal/State eligibility criteria: Reading, math, written expression, and/or oral language disorders, significant identifiable emotional disability, physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, autism, or ADHD.



# Living on the Edges

normal curve



- 1 percent of cases
- 2 qualitative description
- 3 score
- 4 composite score range
- 5 percentile rank



# What happens in the classroom?

- ▶ Performs below average – weaknesses over power strengths
  - ▶ Performs “average”; meets “grade expectations” – strengths and weaknesses cancel each other out
  - ▶ Performs high average – strengths over power weaknesses
- 

# Impact on Child

- Fatigue
- Frustration
- Self-criticism – “I’m stupid”
- Hopelessness
- Underachievement
- Anxiety
- Depression





# What to look for...

- ▶ High verbal abilities and average academic performance
- ▶ Students who are a mystery because they are not performing to their perceived potential
- ▶ Poor handwriting; mixture of upper and lower case words
- ▶ Poor spelling; can get most right on Friday's spelling test, but forgets most words by Monday
- ▶ Fails to respond to literacy efforts that emphasize *more* reading; reading level may improve by end of school year, but gains are lost by fall.
- ▶ Challenged to understand social situations. Doesn't read other people
- ▶ Public speaking
- ▶ Tying shoes
- ▶ Meeting new people



# More things to look for...

- ▶ Difficulty memorizing math facts
  - ▶ Frustration with learning and producing work
  - ▶ Trouble with body control and impulsive responding
  - ▶ Participating in sports
  - ▶ Standing up for themselves
  - ▶ Attempting new activities
  - ▶ Riding a bike
  - ▶ Driving a car
  - ▶ Getting a job
  - ▶ Going to college.
- 



# Twice-Exceptional (2e)

- ▶ Aspergers Disorder - a deficit in engaging in a reciprocal relationship; inability or difficulty noticing and understanding social nuances
  - ▶ Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity (executive functioning deficits)
- 



# Twice-Exceptional (2e)

- ▶ Dyslexia - difficulty learning and processing language, despite adequate intelligence, instruction, and motivation
- ▶ Dysgraphia - deficit in fine-motor functioning which affects writing.
- ▶ Sensory Integration Disorder (SID) - difficulty with different sensory systems and motor systems working together.
- ▶ Depression - sadness, irritability, apathy
- ▶ Anxiety – persistent worry, fear, avoidance



# ASSESSMENT





# Emotions

What kinds of emotions does the word “testing” evoke?

- ▶ Overwhelm
  - ▶ Anxiety
  - ▶ Worry
  - ▶ Stress
  - ▶ Fear of the unknown
- 



# A Sensitive Approach

As an assessor...

- ✧ Take a sensitive and therapeutic approach
  - ✧ Be sensitive to the client's experience
  - ✧ Be sensitive to the client's needs
  - ✧ Be aware of how the client is feeling
- 



# Stress Impacts Performance

Stress during testing can impact:

- ❖ Performance
  - ❖ Motivation
  - ❖ Energy Level
  - ❖ Confidence
  - ❖ Test Data
- 



# A Positive Experience

The testing process can be:

- ✧ Fun
  - ✧ Therapeutic
  - ✧ Empowering
- 



# Sensitivity for the Sensitive

Be sensitive to your client's sensitivities & needs.

- ✧ Emotional
- ✧ Sensory-Motor Processing
- ✧ Processing Style
  - ☑ Speed
  - ☑ Input
  - ☑ Output



# Sensitivity for the Sensitive

Be sensitive to your client's sensitivities & needs.

- ✧ Comfortable environment
- ✧ Follow the child's lead
- ✧ Awareness



# Genuine & Real

Engage the child in the process by being YOU

Being a “Professional”

versus

Being a “Professional Human Being”

- ✧ Be yourself
- ✧ Respect the child
- ✧ Respect their needs
- ✧ Engage them in the process
- ✧ Allow for their voice to be heard
- ✧ Be a role model for how perfect “imperfect” can be



# The child's investment

## Motivation through the tough times

*As appropriate and with respect to each subtests' limitation & rules:*

- ✧ Respect the child's unique approach
- ✧ If the test allows, allow the child enough time to process, formulate, and demonstrate knowledge
- ✧ Acknowledge & praise effort, use of strategies, and success
- ✧ Make the task fun
- ✧ Allow for creativity
- ✧ Allow for breaks
- ✧ Follow challenging tasks with tasks that tap in to strength areas and vice versa

# The Power of Creativity

## Creativity as a key to getting “unstuck”

- ✧ What do you imagine is happening in your brain right now?
- ✧ Encourage the child to describe what is causing them to feel “stuck”
  - ✧ Through discussion
  - ✧ Stories
  - ✧ Acting
  - ✧ Building
  - ✧ Drawing

“

It's like a pile of papers in your brain, swirling around, and one of them

”

has the word you want but you can't find it in that moment!



# Unleash their potential

Positive and successful experiences result in...

- ✧ Will power
- ✧ Confidence
- ✧ Empowerment
- ✧ Motivation to try again

**“My brain is a galaxy and I find new things to discover, places I’ve never visited before.”**

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- ▶ In using this therapeutic model of assessment, many clients have found the experience of testing to be fun, therapeutic, empowering, and rewarding.
  - ▶ **Supporting the needs of gifted, sensitive, and intuitive clients can lead to the discovery of hidden gems and keys for success**



# NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT





# Neuropsychological Assessment

Why a neuropsychological evaluation?

A neuropsychological evaluation involves testing and the analysis of:

- General abilities
- Processing of information
- One's ability to demonstrate their knowledge
- Social-emotional functioning

# Neuropsychological Assessment

More specifically, a neuropsychological evaluation considers one's...

- ❖ Intelligence
- ❖ Achievement
- ❖ Attention
- ❖ Executive Functioning
- ❖ Sensory-Motor Processing
- ❖ Auditory Processing
- ❖ Receptive/Expressive Language
- ❖ Memory
- ❖ Visual Processing
- ❖ Visual Motor Integration
- ❖ Emotional
- ❖ Social Processing



# Look at the child as a whole

For example, when assessing for a child that has difficulties with focus, think about what it takes to pay attention.

- ❖ Auditory Attention
- ❖ Auditory Processing
- ❖ Sensitivity to Stimuli
- ❖ Memory
- ❖ Visual Attention
- ❖ Visual Processing
- ❖ Emotional
- ❖ Creativity
- ❖ Boredom



# Interpreting the Data

## Data Analysis

- ✧ Identify strengths and weaknesses
- ✧ Compare the score to the child's general abilities
  - ✓ Is there a discrepancy between one's level of intelligence and the child's ability to demonstrate his or her knowledge?



# Interpreting the Data

## Data Analysis

- ✧ Look beyond the score.
  - ✓ What happened during test administration, what did you observe? Is the client compensating somehow?
  - ✓ Is it easy to get a point on the subtest items?
  - ✓ What aspect of functioning is the test really assessing?
    - ✓ For example, is the reading fluency subtest on the WJ a good measure of reading accuracy? The child might just get the gist and then quickly marking yes or no.



# Interpretation Beyond the Score

## Interpret Beyond the Score

Test	Percentile	Classification
WIAT Spelling	55%	Average
WJ Achievement Spelling of Sounds	3%	Borderline



# Interpretation Beyond the Score

## Interpret Beyond the Score

Test	Percentile	Classification
WIAT Sentence Composition	47%	Average
Sentence Combining	63%	Average
Sentence Building	34%	Average



# Interpretation Beyond the Score

## Qualitative Data

GORT-5	Percentile	Classification
Rate	37	Average
Accuracy	37	Average
Fluency	37	Average
Comprehension	50	Average
Oral Reading Index	37	Average



# Personality, Learning Style, and Creativity

- ▶ Parent and Teacher Checklists of Gifted Characteristics
- ▶ MMTIc – Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children
- ▶ Overexcitability Inventory for Parents
- ▶ Torrance Checklist of Creative Positives

# Murphy-Meiesgeier Type Indicator

<p><b><u>EXTRAVERSION</u></b></p> <p>Prefer to focus their attention on the outside world of people and things</p>	<p><b><u>INTROVERSION</u></b></p> <p>Tend to focus their attention on the inner world of ideas and impressions</p>
<p><b><u>SENSING</u></b></p> <p>Prefer to take in information through the 5 senses and focus on here and now.</p>	<p><b><u>INTUITION</u></b></p> <p>Take in information from patterns and the big picture and focus on future possibilities.</p>
<p><b><u>THINKING</u></b></p> <p>Tend to make decisions based primarily on logic and on objective analysis of cause and effect.</p>	<p><b><u>FEELING</u></b></p> <p>Tend to make decisions based primarily on values and on subjective evaluation of person-centered concerns.</p>
<p><b><u>JUDGING</u></b></p> <p>Tend to like a planned and organized approach to life and prefer to have things settled.</p>	<p><b><u>PERCEIVING</u></b></p> <p>Tend to like a flexible and spontaneous approach to life and prefer to keep their options open.</p>



# *Overexcitability Inventory for Parents*

- ▶ The Overexcitability Inventory for Parents is a 50-item scale designed to measure the strength of five overexcitabilities (OE): Psychomotor, Sensual, Imaginational, Intellectual and Emotional.
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- ▶ **Psychomotor OE** is characterized by high levels of movement, drive, and an augmented capacity for being active and energetic.
  - ▶ **Sensual OE** is enhanced sensitivity to taste, touch, sound, sight, and smell.
  - ▶ **Intellectual OE** brings with it an insatiable quest for knowledge, endless questioning and curiosity, love of ideas, keen analytical skills, and a love of complex ideas.
  - ▶ **Imaginational OE** is expressed as creative imagination, inventiveness, and a preference for unusual and unique ideas.
  - ▶ **Emotional OE** is recognized as intensity of feelings, identification with others' feelings, strong emotional ties, and attachments to others.

# Literature Review

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Thank You



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