

Creativity



Although there is no single way to define creativity, it can be broadly thought of as the ability to transcend traditional ideas and ways of doing things in order to create meaningful new ones. Creativity is both a capacity we are born with and a skill we can further develop.

Fostering creativity both in and out of the classroom not only encourages learning, engagement, and higher-level thinking, it is essential as we prepare the next generation to take on the problems of our day. By encouraging creative students to consider innovative solutions not found on conventional paths, we position them to operate and contribute in their own unique ways.

Creativity Explained

In schools and society, thinking around creativity often is limited to artistic expression presented through works in the visual and performing arts, music and writing. However, creativity extends beyond such artistic expression into limitless use of the imagination to create something altogether new.

It is present in all areas of study and life and has long been thought of through the Four P's of Creativity, which are the creative person, process, product, and press. The Four P's represent by whom, in what way, with what outcome, and in what environment creativity is expressed. Not all creativity results in profound works such as those of Michelangelo or Einstein, it also shows up in personally meaningful output such as a handmade card for a friend, a new dessert recipe entered into a baking contest, and novel ways to solve mathematical equations.

Acknowledging and fostering the gifts of creative students can be challenging, especially when a limited understanding of creativity is applied. Because sensitivity and intensity are

prevalent in creative students, their behaviors may draw more attention than the creative gifts they have to share resulting in a focus on fixing what is “wrong” rather than fostering what is “right”. This can be incredibly frustrating and anxiety producing for the student, which places them at a distinct disadvantage both in and out of the classroom.

Creatively gifted students have the ability to apply knowledge and problem-solving to develop new, uncommon, or unique products and ideas that typically are relevant to their areas of interest. They may outperform peers on problem solving and higher-order thinking exercises as they scan the environment for data or stimuli and connect seemingly disparate objects through some relationship. Learning environments, which include involvement of parents and teachers, need to be ready for and open to such contributions if creative students are to explore, expand, and share their gifts and ultimately reach their potential.

Clinical psychologists with expertise in creativity can be invaluable partners as families and educators work to understand challenges faced by creative students who are stifled by inflexible curriculum, limited resources, and a lack of opportunities to think in the ways they are designed to. Collaboration is essential.



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Characteristics of Creativity

A common thread is that creative students think differently, observe more keenly, and notice things that their classmates, teachers and family members may miss. Creatively gifted students also typically share a number of common characteristics, including:

- High tolerance for ambiguity
- Attraction to complex and messy problems where they can apply their advanced abilities in order to see solutions from multiple angles
- Flexibility in their thinking
- Propensity for blending ideas rather than subscribing to rigid thought
- Preference for working alone as they find energy from within
- Independent thought and not easily swayed by opinions of the majority or competing views
- Sensitivity and intensity with higher susceptibility to anxiety and social emotional challenges
- Significant need for time and space to think and create in their own way

Supporting Students

Essential steps toward authentic appreciation for creativity in the twice-exceptional students is understanding it is a recognized form of giftedness in the United States and accepting that each student's journey is uniquely different. Paying close attention to their creative qualities and creative behaviors is a start to supporting and nurturing them in addition to finding time for them to think and operate as they are designed to. Highly structured classrooms and schedules outside of school may limit the time they have to explore, experiment, make mistakes, and discover, which can lead to frustration, disengagement, and social emotional issues. Striking the right balance of structure and freedom may take time to develop but is well worth it.

Clinical professionals versed in creativity also can be essential partners on the quest to identify appropriate supports and resources. They also may recommend cognitive and social emotional assessments, such as the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking[©], which considers how creatively a child's mind works when presented with opportunities to create titles for pictures, expressions, imagery and humor. In addition, recommendations for counseling, therapies, and ideal learning and living environments that support and appropriately challenge the student are can be included in clinical assessment reports and shared with the student's teachers and counselors.

Resources for Parents & Educators

- 2e News
- Bright & Quirky
- Davidson Institute for Talent Development
- GHF Gifted Learners (formerly Gifted Homeschoolers Forum)
- Hoagies' Gifted Education
- Let's Talk 2e
- National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC)
- Renzulli Center at University of Connecticut
- Roeper Review
- Summit Center
- Supporting the Emotional Needs of the Gifted (SENG)

About Summit Center

Summit Center, founded by Drs. Daniel B. Peters and Susan Daniels, provides educational and comprehensive assessments, consultations, and counseling for children, teens, adults, and families. We work with clients who are neurodiverse, gifted, talented, twice-exceptional (have both gifted and less developed abilities), and/or are asynchronous in their development. Summit Center has assembled an expert team of professionals and specialists dedicated to using a strengths-based approach to help our clients reach their fullest developmental potential.