

Locating Highly Gifted Children

In keeping with special education designations, it is possible to roughly categorize gifted children as mildly, moderately, highly and extraordinarily gifted. The ranges of giftedness on most tests (except the Stanford-Binet) can be characterized as seen in the table on this page.

Highly gifted children can also be found through administration and analysis of above-level aptitude or achievement tests. The third standard deviation criterion can be applied to discriminate highly from moderately gifted students on these measures. This method would be ineffective on grade-level based assessments because there is an attenuated range at the top of the scale. The instrument must provide sufficient ceiling to spread the scores in order to differentiate degrees of exceptionality.

Talent searches provide an excellent view of what happens when we remove ceiling effects; they are an effective method of locating the highly gifted in junior high school populations. Students who achieve at the 95th or 97th percentile on grade level achievement tests in reading and mathematics are eligible to take the SAT or ACT in 7th and 8th grades. Extremely precocious students can qualify in 5th or 6th grades. When an examination designed for college entrants is given to 12- and 13-year-olds who appear on achievement tests to be quite similar in ability, their scores spread across the full gamut of the test, from 200 to 800. For many, this is the first op-

portunity they have had to demonstrate the full strength of their capabilities.

The average scores for college-bound seniors in 1994 were 423 on

one year to the next in this age group. Recently, a precocious 8-year-old scored well above 700 on the SAT-M!

These methods are likely to find academically precocious children but may miss children who are highly gifted in specific areas, such as the visual and performing arts, creative production, or ethical development. To include these children, teacher judgment should be used and observational data can be collected to locate children whose advancement in any area is noticeably beyond the level demonstrated by other gifted students. •

RANGES OF GIFTEDNESS

115 - 129 IQ Mildly gifted (+1-2 SD)

130 - 144 IQ Moderately gifted (+2-3 SD)

145 - 159 IQ Highly gifted (+3-4 SD)

160+ IQ Extraordinarily gifted (>+4 SD)

On the Binet tests scores should be adjusted to 132, 148, and 164.

the Verbal (V) section and 479 on the Mathematics (M) section (this figure varies annually). High school seniors who attain scores in the high 600 range on either V or M could be considered highly gifted. The talent search programs usually select students who score 430 V or 500 M in seventh or eighth grade to participate in special programs, such as college-level courses. These students may be thought of as moderately gifted. Students who score significantly beyond this range could be considered highly gifted. VanTassel-Baska (1984) designated students in the 530+ range as significantly advanced from other talent search participants and in need of additional provisions. This score represents a composite of V and M scores, and is therefore a high estimate for verbal and a low estimate for mathematics scores. These figures would have to be adjusted for fifth and sixth graders because 80 to 90 point increases may occur from

REFERENCE

- VanTassel-Baska, J. (1984). The talent search as an identification model. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 23, 172-176.

Linda Kreger Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and Director of The Gifted Development Center and the Institute for the Study of Advanced Development, in Denver, Colorado. Editor of *Advanced Development*, the first journal on adult giftedness, she has also edited the textbook, *Counseling the Gifted and Talented* (Love, 1993). For nine years she served on the faculty of the University of Denver in gifted education and counseling psychology. A vocal advocate for parents of the gifted, she has been studying giftedness for 35 years and has contributed nearly 200 articles, chapters, and books.