High Achiever or Gifted?

Sometimes it is hard to distinguish a student who is a high achiever from one who is gifted. While it is true that gifted students can also appear to be high achievers, often the student who is truly a high achiever is doing a wonderful job in class and does not need support outside of the classroom environment.

The first question a teacher or parent needs to ask is, “How much effort is the student putting into his/her work?” High achievers have an admirable work ethic that allows them to finish their classwork (sometimes even ahead of time) and they also turn in quality work. A gifted student often does not have to put much effort into his/her work because most of it comes so easily to him/her.

Many gifted students (not all) have unique traits that set them apart from other students. They often see themselves as equals with adults, can be difficult if they don’t agree, strong willed, they may think they know more than the teacher or parent, they don’t always have to apply themselves, they may ask annoying questions or challenge the teacher and can appear to be arrogant.

Remember that not all gifted students display these traits. None of them fit into a “gifted mold”. If you have a child or student that displays many of these characteristics – you may want to consider referring that child for IMPACT testing in the spring. Be sure to talk to the counselor or the student’s classroom teacher about the possibility.

SMART or GIFTED?

As parents, we all want to believe our children are smart and stand out as a good student in class. To look like the “smart kid” in class, often the child has to put effort into his/her work. Handwriting is neat and assignments are handed in on time, or even before they are due. A smart student is a child who is successful in class and does not need outside help to be an achiever.

A gifted student does not always “look” smart. Instead, the gifted student may not have to put much effort into his/her work and may not do the work at all if he/she does not see a reason for doing it. Gifted students may not have patience with the repeated practice that is usually needed for the average student. A gifted student’s mind may be thinking so rapidly that handwriting is difficult to read which may cause the teacher not to realize what the student is actually able to do. Rarely do we see a gifted student that is good at everything. Usually he/she excels in a certain area like math or writing.

The surprising thing is that many gifted students need SUPPORT to be successful. If you feel your child is able to master the grade level curriculum without effort and needs more challenging work – talk to the classroom teacher. Ask for the teacher’s input as to how your child does at school. There is a big difference between a parent working one on one with a child and his/her learning within a large group of students; so you need the classroom teacher’s perspective. If you both feel that your child needs more of a challenge, think about referring your child for IMPACT’s screening in the spring. Talk to the counselor or the student’s classroom teacher about the procedure to refer a student.