The Neurodivergent Classroom

Giftedness at a Glance

Giftedness means high or exceptionally high ability in one or more areas. It doesn't automatically turn into achievement, and it needs the right learning opportunities.



What you may notice in class

- Picks things up fast, but may have gaps in the basics.
- Boredom shows up as acting out or tuning out.
- Fear of mistakes can stop them from even starting.
- Asks deep questions or offers their own theories.
- Performance varies with interest and how well the task fits.
- Average grades don't rule out high ability.
- They may also have other learning or developmental differences.
- In younger kids, too little challenge often shows up as withdrawal or restlessness. (elementary school)
- In older students, too little challenge and perfectionism show up in long-term projects. (middle and high school)

Strengths

- Asks unusually deep and far-reaching questions.
- Carries principles over to new areas.
- Comes up with their own theories and solutions.
- Shows high ability in particular areas.
- Throws themselves into topics they love.
- Connects creative, academic or artistic ideas.

What helps

- Go deeper instead of more of the same.
- Check what they already know before reviewing more.
- Teach them directly how to handle mistakes.
- Ask real questions with no ready-made answer.
- Use their interests as a way into required content.
- Offer several ways to show what they've learned.
- Give complex tasks that call for transfer and reasoning.
- Look at acceleration as a team, with a clear process.
- Give feedback on effort and revision.
- With younger kids, offer open questions and extension tasks. (elementary school)
- With older students, set challenging goals, milestones and time to reflect. (middle and high school)

What tends not to help

- More work at a level they've mastered.
- Accelerating again and again without checking what's stuck.
- Assuming they don't need any support.
- Assuming high ability from one or two signs.

Words that carry

"Let's see what you already know first."

"You're getting a harder task, not just more of them."

"Mistakes show us what you can learn next."

"Follow your question and see where your idea leads." (elementary school)

"What big question would you like to tackle on your own?" (middle and high school)

Where to find support

National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) nagc.org
US association with resources on identification, acceleration and teaching.

SENG (Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted) sengifted.org
US nonprofit focused on the social and emotional needs of gifted people.

Local organizations
Many countries and states have their own gifted education associations. Ask your district, school authority or gifted coordinator.

More in the Teacher Portal: neurodivergentclassroom.com/teacher-portal/giftedness/

Sources: National Association for Gifted Children: What is Giftedness? · Assouline et al.: A Nation Empowered, Volume 2 · Kim: The Effectiveness of Current Interventions to Reverse Underachievement · Monda et al.: Behavioral and Socio-Emotional Disorders in Intellectual Giftedness