

Parent Version: GT/LD Pattern of Strengths/Weaknesses

Purpose: This tool was developed to support parents as they begin to suspect their child may be Gifted and Talented/Learning Disabled (GT/LD). Keep in mind that GT/LD students may mask their strengths and weaknesses for a variety of reasons so consider the unique needs of students who are English Language Learners (ELL), students who are on Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS), and students with other unique profiles or backgrounds.

Child's Name: _____

Grade: _____

Directions:

- 1) First, check for strengths. Place a check mark in any box (in the strengths column) where the area is a *significant* strength as compared to the children of the same age.
- 2) Second, check for weaknesses. Place a check mark in any box where the area is a *significant* weakness or area of concern for you.
- 3) Strengths or weaknesses observed but not listed can be written in as comments/notes.

If there are many areas checked on *both* sides of the chart, the child *may* have a pattern of strengths and weaknesses consistent with that of identified GT/LD students.

Cognitive

Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Speaks articulately <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-on tasks/building <input type="checkbox"/> Figures things out <input type="checkbox"/> Knows a lot of facts and words <input type="checkbox"/> Makes connections between events, ideas, and situations <input type="checkbox"/> Learns quickly and remembers things of interest for a long time <input type="checkbox"/> Thinks and wonders frequently about big, complex ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Is creative and imaginative <input type="checkbox"/> Is curious, asks a lot of questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Works slowly <input type="checkbox"/> Forgets details <input type="checkbox"/> Doesn't follow multi-step directions easily <input type="checkbox"/> Can't remember things that I just said <input type="checkbox"/> Can't remember things that are not interesting to him/her <input type="checkbox"/> Gets overwhelmed when a lot of problems are on the page <input type="checkbox"/> Does things out of order or in a disorganized way <input type="checkbox"/> Has difficulty copying, bad handwriting <input type="checkbox"/> Is distractible or hyperactive	

Very advanced speaking ability is a characteristic of a GT/LD student. Generally, the GT/LD student is driven to learn about key areas of interest. While they may have difficulty in organizing their thinking, they tend to be able to make good connections and have strong problem-solving capabilities. If weaknesses in memory and organization are compensated for, these strengths generally flourish.

Reading

Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Has advanced listening comprehension (understands challenging stories and books that are read to them) <input type="checkbox"/> Talks about stories and asks/answers complex questions about the books	<input type="checkbox"/> Has difficulty sounding out the words (decoding) <input type="checkbox"/> Reads slowly and not smoothly <input type="checkbox"/> Forgets what he/she read <input type="checkbox"/> Struggles to write about reading	

Most GT/LD students have excellent reading comprehension skills. However, if reading is impacted, the most common areas of need are in decoding (basic word-reading ability) and fluency (speed/smoothness). Students with severe decoding skills often have trouble understanding and remembering what they read. These weaknesses can impact the student's comprehension of independently read text. If the story is read to them and the written component is removed from the comprehension task, often the GT/LD student's oral responses are advanced for his/her age.

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Written Expression

Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has creative ideas, originality <input type="checkbox"/> May have a strong personality that shines through in writing <input type="checkbox"/> Uses advanced word choice, vocabulary is that typical of an older child <input type="checkbox"/> Understands and can tell you what they want to write about <input type="checkbox"/> Has a lot of background knowledge and information about writing topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Putting ideas onto paper is torture <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty “getting started” <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty placing ideas in a logical sequence or order so the writing is hard to understand <input type="checkbox"/> Writes very little <input type="checkbox"/> Has weak spelling, punctuation, and capitalization <input type="checkbox"/> Has poor handwriting <input type="checkbox"/> Writes very slowly 	
<p>Most GT/LD students’ strengths in writing are only evident verbally through their oral expression (until they learn compensatory strategies) as most often their weaknesses impact the students’ abilities to get their thoughts out on paper. When the students read back or discuss their writing, they may verbally elaborate and add unlimited description and detail. Some students have great difficulty with the mechanics of writing but can put their thoughts onto paper. Others have more difficulty figuring out how to filter through all their ideas and narrow their focus. Others have difficulty generating/organizing ideas and getting started. Some students have all of these challenges.</p>		

Math

Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Grasps mathematical concepts easily (natural math thinker) <input type="checkbox"/> Figures out math problems on his/her own <input type="checkbox"/> Comes up with new or alternative solutions to problems <input type="checkbox"/> Relates math concepts to real-life situations (using math in the real world) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has difficulty with computing (particularly long-division, multi-digit multiplication, working with fractions/decimals...) <input type="checkbox"/> Forgets addition and/or multiplication facts or is slow to recall these facts <input type="checkbox"/> Has difficulty showing work, explaining how he/she got the answer 	
<p>Many GT/LD students are strong mathematical thinkers and grasp taught concepts quickly. Typical areas of weakness include calculations, basic facts, and showing work. In contrast, the GT/LD student may be very strong in verbal skills, but have a clear weakness for number sense and math concepts. This student finds math challenging, while having a stronger set of reading skills.</p>		

Expressive Language

Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments/Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Has creative and unique ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Speaks quickly and easily about a variety of topics <input type="checkbox"/> Has advanced vocabulary for age <input type="checkbox"/> Engages in articulate, “adult-like” conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Struggles to come up with the right word quickly <input type="checkbox"/> Delivers ideas in a disorganized way (may talk around an idea or jump all over the place) <input type="checkbox"/> Strays from the topic 	
<p>Most GT/LD students have excellent expressive language skills and are described as highly verbal and articulate. Some students may have difficulties with word retrieval and will talk around an idea. Some students may know what they want to say but start and stop or sequence their ideas inappropriately.</p>		

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Receptive Language

Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Learns easily through listening <input type="checkbox"/> Understands spoken language, including non-literal and figurative language like jokes, idioms, expressions, similes, metaphors, and figures of speech.	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty following verbal directions <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty identifying salient/important points from lectures or conversations	
<p>Most GT/LD students have strong receptive language ability and learn well by listening to the teachers and others. However, they often have difficulty following directions that are presented orally or identifying what is important. Attention difficulties may impact a student's listening comprehension despite strong receptive language ability.</p>		

Social/Emotional

Characteristics	Comments/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem related to school performance (says, "I'm stupid") <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious about school but generally happy otherwise <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids homework (particularly reading and writing tasks)	
<p>While social/emotional difficulty is not a primary characteristic of a learning disability, many GT/LD students (whose strengths and needs are not recognized or addressed) struggle with poor self-esteem, anxiety about school-related tasks, and frustration. They may avoid tasks that they are incapable of doing well (e.g., reading, writing) but remain engaged during instruction that is strength based (e.g., discussion, hands on). Pervasive behavioral or emotional issues are not typical for GT/LD students, and may often dissipate when/if the disability and the gifts are recognized and addressed.</p>	

Talents/Interests

Characteristics	Comments/Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> May possess a special talent or gift (e.g., musical, dramatic, artistic) <input type="checkbox"/> Has varied, deep interests and a passion to learn about these topics <input type="checkbox"/> Engages in self-selected "projects" and uses leisure time in ways unusual for a child of his/her age	
<p>Many GT/LD students have special talents or gifts that emerge when nurtured. These students typically love to learn about topics of interest. Often, a GT/LD student will be working on a "project" at home (e.g., building a rocket, designing an invention, creating a neighborhood business) that clearly illustrates their creativity and intelligence.</p>	

Questions for the school:

- Is my child included in appropriately challenging accelerated and enriched instruction?
 - William and Mary
 - Junior Great Books
 - Jacob's Ladder
 - Math acceleration
 - Science/social studies enrichment
 - GT/Honors/AP courses (middle/high school)
 - Independent Study Project or Independent Anchor Activity in area of interest
 - Wings Mentor
 - After school activity/club

- Is my child receiving support in his/her areas of weakness?
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Math
 - Organization

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Resources:

It is strongly recommended that all parents with GT/LD students read Twice Exceptional Students: A Guidebook for Supporting the Achievement of Gifted Students with Special Needs. It is a comprehensive manual with information regarding identification, characteristics, what works, interventions, programs, and services for twice exceptional students. It is available in schools and can be downloaded from the GT/LD web site at <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/enriched/gtld/>

Follow Up:

Share a copy of this checklist and your impressions with your child's classroom teacher, the counselor at the school, and/or an administrator (principal or assistant principal). If you suspect that your child has a learning disability, contact your school. If you have questions about this checklist or about MCPS GT/LD programs and services, contact Marisa Stemple, GT/LD Instructional Specialist, at the number/address below.

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