



Asynchronous Development

**Asynchronous Development simply means, “out-of-sync.”
Considered by most experts to be a hallmark of giftedness.**

Gifted children often develop cognitively at a much faster rate than they develop physically and emotionally. This discrepancy creates unique problems. Although their emotions and bodies may be in-sync with their age peers, academically gifted children’s minds function more quickly and at higher cognition levels.

The gifted child may appear to be many ages at once. He may be eight chronologically as he rides his bike, twelve while playing chess, and fifteen while working through his algebra homework. Or, a child may appear to be a whiz-kid in the classroom, yet be inept at fine motor skills.

Adults who see outstanding intellectual skills that need stimulation, can’t understand why the child cries easily or has no organizational skills. Friendships are often a concern for child with asynchronous development. They may select friends at their intellectual age, feeling “out-of-sync” with their chronological classmates. Intellectual age mates understand their jokes and function at the same level on games they play. In some situations, gifted intellectuals may try to dominate play because they think they “know how the game *should* be played.” Yet, in physical play, they may prefer children of the same chronological age, or younger.

When families discover great discrepancies between cognitive, emotional and social development, it is important for parents and other adults to act as “multi-level mediators” in order to effectively help the child through varying circumstances. ¹

Emotions can’t be treated separately from intellectual awareness or physical development. The gifted child functions as a whole. Oftentimes there is, however, a need to fine-tune individual “parts” of the gifted child in order to develop appropriate, acceptable behavior. ²

Society often values the products of gifted children’s mental capacities, while traits that come with those capacities are not. We cheer at accomplishments, such as putting good thoughts into a winning essay, but call the same child who reacts emotionally to war a neurotic. Gifted children have an acutely heightened awareness of most everything, so they recognize the turmoil within themselves when they do not react with equal ease to all things. These children need affective training to help them understand themselves and the fact that they may not be emotionally ready to deal with issues their cognitive brains discern. ³

Characteristics of Asynchronous Development. The gifted child...

- acts different ages in different situations.
- may look like a loner or introvert in the classroom because he sees himself as different from his age peers.
- may be domineering, seeing himself as the only person in the classroom who knows how to do a task.
- may be an avid reader, using the societally accepted mode of retreat from reality through books.
- may exhibit a rare sense of humor and understand sarcasm, which causes others to think the child is trying to be obnoxious when, in fact, the child’s intellectual level is much more advanced than other children his

age. In a social context, however, the child doesn't realize he is being offensive because of his asynchronous development.

- may intensify as IQ increases.
- who is twice-exceptional (2E) is at greater risk for asynchrony.
- may feel out of step with societal norms.
- may have one set of age-peer friends and another set of intellectual peers. (Walker, 2002)

Counseling Aspects of Asynchronous Development. The gifted child...

- may see through a counselor who tries to direct them. Open discussion may be a better route to take with a gifted child. The counselor can direct the conversation but allow it to flow freely through the child in the direction that they desire.
- whose parents are considering grade or subject acceleration need to consider their child's possible asynchronous development in the physical and socio-emotional areas.
- may benefit from bibliotherapy, to see how others have suppressed their tendencies to want to be perfect all the time.⁴

Family Concerns with Asynchronous Development. Parents...

- need to offer love and support for all the child's endeavors, including those areas where growth and maturity are less developed.
- need to encourage the child to try all things, taking baby steps. Often the child will shy away from doing things s/he is afraid of doing poorly. The child may be fearful that others will make fun of him/her.
- need to act as mediators and listen to the child and get the child's perspective about school, play, and other social situations. Conversations may help guide the child to comprehend how and why s/he should respond to different situations in certain ways.
- can use role-play scenarios so s/he can visualize actions from several different perspectives and then discuss feelings.
- can facilitate the child's interests by arranging times for play with both older and same-age playmates.
- who want to consider acceleration need to consider both academic and physical/emotional ages.

Bibliography and Resources.

The above excerpted from: Pridemore, Janis. Columbiana Co. Educational Service Center.

¹ Kearney, K. 1992. Life in the Asynchronous Family. *Understanding Our Gifted*, 4, No. 6, July- Aug.

² Silverman, L.K. 1997. The Construct of Asynchronous Development. *Peabody Journal of Education*.

³ Tolan, S.S. 2003. Giftedness as Asynchronous Development. http://stephanietolan.com/gt_as_asynch.htm

Other excerpts:

Piirto, J. 1999. *Talented Children and Adults*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice-Hall, Inc.;

Silverman, L. ed. 2000. *Counseling the Gifted and Talented*. Denver: Love Publishing Company.

⁴ Bibliotherapy is an expressive therapy that uses an individual's relationship to the content of books and poetry and other written words as therapy. Bibliotherapy is often combined with writing therapy. It has been shown to be effective in the treatment of depression. These results have been shown to be long-lasting.

Florida parents considering having their children screened as gifted should read the **Florida Department of Education Handbook for Parents of Gifted Children** (free download): www.FLDOE.org/ESE/pdf/p-gifted.pdf

Additional important resources for gifted children and parents can be found at: www.QuestGAC.org

If you have questions, please contact the **Director of Exceptional Student Education** at 352-797-7022 or contact the **Quest Academy Gifted Advisory Council** at Info@QuestGAC.org.