

# Hard Stop! You are Creating a False Narrative and Further Marginalizing the Well-Being of Gifted and Highly—Profoundly Gifted Students!

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Human development, potential, and well-being are at stake for gifted and especially highly—profoundly gifted children. This personal, projected identity that being gifted is all about being smart or getting good grades (Arnold-Ratliff, 2026) creates a false narrative. Being a good student is about performance. Giftedness is about human development. Being gifted encompasses all areas of development marked by heightened intensity, sensitivity and awareness—inherent across advanced and often asynchronous social, emotional, physical, and cognitive abilities, development, and life experiences (<https://giftedconsortium.com/>).

Prevalent myths, historical false narratives, and the fight for an appropriate education continue to plague the well-being of gifted and highly—profoundly gifted children across the globe as evident in the book, *Highly—Profoundly Gifted: Universal Understandings and Holistic Approaches* (De Wit & Wood, 2025). This is a systemic crisis thwarting human development and potential and most importantly the well-being of gifted individuals and families.

Research has demonstrated that highly—profoundly gifted children begin this “spongelike” development *earlier* than their peers. Miraca Gross (2004) documented this early development in the exceptional children she studied. Alert and exceedingly aware, highly—profoundly gifted children commonly interact with their social and environmental influences in extraordinary ways

from birth. It has often been reported that nurses were the first to recognize these greater-than-typical newborn responses in the hospital.

An international study of highly—profoundly gifted children found that the children began reading at 3.5 years, on average and began crawling at 5.2 months (Wood et al., 2024). If you take a moment to imagine a child crawling much earlier than typical, you can begin to understand how early movement can spark and compound early curiosity, exploration, and self-directed learning. Early movement and sparked cognitive development have the ability to enhance development across all domains.

In the 2024 study of highly—profoundly gifted children and adolescents, nearly 65% scored high in psychomotor overexcitability (Wood et al., 2024). Psychomotor overexcitability is the greater-than-typical response of the neuromuscular system. Early movement is a natural trajectory that often remains a core part of the gifted experience even through adulthood.

We know a child can be both gifted and have ADHD, known as being twice-exceptional or 2E. However, tragically, many gifted and especially highly—profoundly gifted children are misdiagnosed with ADHD by those who might not be familiar with gifted development nor recognize overexcitabilities. Misguided interventions can change the developmental trajectory of the gifted child. The greater-than-typical need to move is common in gifted and especially highly—profoundly gifted children and adults.

In the same study, 76% of the children, ages 4-13 years scored high in all five forms of overexcitability: emotional, intellectual, imaginal, psychomotor, and sensual. When you understand this greater-than-typical neurological response across all areas of development, you can begin to understand how “spongelike” development begins at birth and continues at an extraordinary rate and capacity. Overexcitabilities can lead, motivate, and propel development.

But, overexcitabilities and gifted development need to be understood as such —and advanced and often asynchronous development needs to be identified and supported by teachers, program administrators, counselors, psychologists, pediatricians, and parents. Training is essential. Children who are gifted require programs designed to meet their unique educational and developmental needs including hallmark traits of greater-than-typical sensitivity, intensity, and awareness — prevalent in highly—profoundly gifted individuals (for examples from the research, please see, *Prevalence of Emotional, Intellectual, Imaginational, Psychomotor, and Sensual Overexcitabilities in Highly and Profoundly Gifted Children and Adolescents: A Mixed-Methods Study of Development and Developmental Potential*).

The true narrative is that human development, potential, and well-being are at stake! Access to a developmentally appropriate education is the right of every child including children who are gifted and highly—profoundly gifted. Every single one of us must care. It is our responsibility to continue to strive to fulfill the educational and developmental needs of every child, adolescent, and young adult.

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