



Understanding, Identifying, and Meeting the Needs of Gifted Native American Students



Tamara J. Fisher, M.A.
K-12 Gifted Education Specialist
http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/unwrapping_the_gifted/

* It is important to note that differences in the many various tribal cultures can contribute to the relevancy or lack of relevancy of any item on the list below. It is first necessary to learn about and understand the unique culture(s) of the Indian students you teach. The list below is not intended to be a “one size fits all” list. *

General Characteristics of Gifted Native American Students

a combination of general characteristics of gifted students and general characteristics of Native American students

Quiet, shy, or may appear shy

Group-oriented; good group workers

Although group-focused, they often exhibit more individualistic tendencies than other Native students

Naturalistic, love Nature

Highly creative and artistic; often a storyteller

Very resilient; strong sense of self

Self-disciplined and self-motivated; persistent

Mathematical thinkers with great spatial skills

Curious but not always question-asking; “wait & watch & learn” rather than “question & learn”

More likely to ask questions *after* class

Keen sense of humor

Intuitive about connections

Deeply sensitive

Multi-faceted

Insightful and perceptive – although they don’t always share their insights with others

Leaders who lead quietly but with certainty

Respect those who deserve it

Holistic thinkers and learners; they effectively communicate collective ideas

Responsible in and out of school

Practical problem-solvers

Often excel academically, though sometimes inconsistently

Mild Limited English Proficiency often observed

May not want to be singled out from others; usually don’t draw attention to themselves during class

Reluctant to practice in front of the class

May be an underachieving perfectionist: afraid of failure

Adapt more easily to a foot in both worlds; usually function equally well in both their Native culture and mainstream culture

Tend to be highly interested in learning about and participating in their tribal culture

Even at a young age, they have aspirations of the contributions they want to make to their tribe/reservation

Not as quiet after being identified for the gifted program as they were before identification

Value education and learning, even in the face of peer pressure, although they may hide this value from others, particularly from their peer groups

Suggested Identification Tools/Procedures

- * Kingore Observation Inventory
- * Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students
- * NNAT – Naglieri Non-verbal Abilities Test
- * Other standardized non-verbal tests
- * A list of characteristics of gifted Native American students

- * Use a lot of observation (by teacher, by GT Specialist)
- * Provide teachers with professional development about gifted students, Native American students, and gifted Native American students
- * Create a school atmosphere that is aware of and nurtures tribal culture
- * Find out what the tribe or elders think “gifted” is
- * Provide identified gifted Native students with a support network



For more information, visit these websites:

<http://jaie.asu.edu/v31/V31S1phi.htm>

<http://jaie.asu.edu/v31/index.html>

<http://eric.ed.gov>

http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/fall_97/article7.html

<http://jaie.asu.edu/v31/V31S1per.htm>

<http://www.thememoryhole.org/edu/eric/ed296810.html>

<http://jaie.asu.edu/v31/V31S1Ame.htm>

<http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~nrcgt/news/fall02/fall023.html>

<http://jaie.asu.edu/v31/V31S1nur.htm>

<http://jaie.asu.edu/v31/V31S1thr.htm>

