

Possible Characteristics of High Potential Learners

High Potential Learners are all individuals. It is difficult to generalise about behaviours and characteristics as each learner will be shaped by their experiences to date. Although some of the below might appear contradictory, look out for learners, particularly applicable to those with exceptional high potential, who:

1. Grasp new ideas and concepts quickly, needing little time to practise.
2. Ask questions, often very divergent questions which may appear to have little to do with the topic being studied.
3. Take a long time to complete work as they want to find just the right answer, words, punctuation, phrases, illustrations, etc. They may think carefully before committing to an answer/essay/decision/opening sentence.
4. Strive for perfection and become upset if anything goes wrong. They may want to start again if they make a small mistake.
5. Challenge and correct you!
6. Think divergently and creatively – have loads of possible answers and sometimes find it hard to commit to one.
7. Want the right answer and can get very anxious if this is not cut and dried.
Insist on including everything they know about a topic and find it hard to prioritise.
8. Might find mind maps impossible. Some relish the open-ended nature of mind maps but exceptionally high potential learners might feel overwhelmed by all they want to include or spend so long on one section, they get little out of it as a whole.
9. Are very sensitive. Upsetting world events, home and friendship issues will feel more acute and what seems trivial to you will be overwhelming to them.
10. Find it hard to accept criticism, including perceived criticism such as feedback.
11. Are disorganised and have difficulty managing their time.
12. Might not produce neat, ordered work as the ideas come too fast – think of Leonardo Da Vinci's drawings!
13. Are unwilling to change their mind about an issue and be able to argue vehemently for their viewpoint.
14. Have extraordinary concentration spans when the learning is inspiring or relates to their interests.
15. Have very short attention spans if the learning is too easy or of little interest to them.
16. Are able to draw many and wide-ranging inferences.
17. Are excessively self-critical.
18. Are disruptive when bored.