



# Essentials

## of Gifted Assessment

- A practical guide to identifying and assessing children for giftedness
- Expert advice and tips throughout
- Conveniently formatted for rapid reference

**Steven I. Pfeiffer**

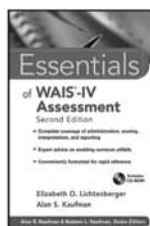
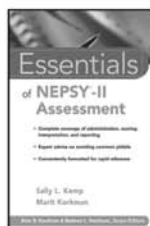
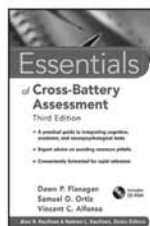
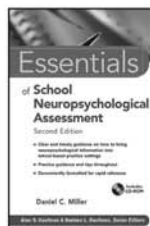
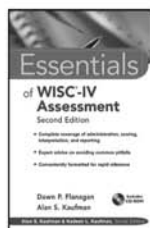
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Steven I. Pfeiffer

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## SERIES PREFACE

In the Essentials of Psychological Assessment series, we have attempted to provide the reader with books that will deliver key practical information in the most efficient and accessible style. Many books in the series feature specific instruments in a variety of domains, such as cognition, personality, education, and neuropsychology. Other books, like *Essentials of Gifted Assessment*, focus on crucial topics for professionals who are involved in any way with assessment—topics such as specific reading disabilities, evidence-based interventions, or ADHD assessment. For the experienced professional, books in the series offer a concise yet thorough review of a test instrument or a specific area of expertise, including numerous tips for best practices. Students can turn to series books for clear and concise overviews of the important assessment tools and key topics in which they must become proficient to practice skillfully, efficiently, and ethically in their chosen fields.

Wherever feasible, visual cues highlighting key points are utilized alongside systematic, step-by-step guidelines. Chapters are focused and succinct. Topics are organized for an easy understanding of the essential material related to a particular test or topic. Theory and research are continually woven into the fabric of each book, but always so as to enhance the practical application of the material rather than to sidetrack or overwhelm readers. With this series, we aim to challenge and assist readers interested in psychological assessment to aspire to the highest level of competency by arming them with the tools they need for knowledgeable, informed practice. We have long been advocates of *intelligent testing*—which incorporates the notion that numbers are meaningless unless they are brought to life by the clinical acumen and expertise of examiners. Assessment must be used to make a difference in the child's or adult's life, or why bother to test? All the books in this series—whether devoted to specific tests or general topics—are consistent with this credo. We want this series to help our readers, novice and veteran alike, to benefit from the intelligent assessment approaches of the authors of each book.

We are delighted to include *Essentials of Gifted Assessment* in our series. Dr. Steven Pfeiffer is, in our opinion, among the small group of the world's leading experts in the field. He is an unusually articulate spokesperson on the varied topics that make up the broad domain of gifted education and gifted assessment. *Essentials of Gifted Assessment* introduces the theory and practice underlying gifted assessment within the context of the history that produced this important field. This book provides an overview of who the gifted are, the reasons why we should identify gifted students, and the purposes of gifted assessment. Key principles of gifted assessment are discussed and an up-to-date overview on gifted assessment measures is provided. Topics include the use of local norms, measuring creativity and motivation, nonverbal measures, the importance of recurring gifted assessment, multipotentiality, gifted testing and minority group students, and evaluating the twice-exceptional student. This book provides practitioners with the tools needed for ethical, evidence-based, and informed clinical practice with high-ability students.

Alan S. Kaufman, PhD, and Nadeen L. Kaufman, EdD  
Series Editors

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*Yale University School of Medicine*

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I gratefully acknowledge the many high-ability students and also parents, psychologists, and educators that I had the privilege of working with and learning from during my tenure as executive director of the Duke University Talent Identification Program and later, as professor and director of clinical training at Florida State University and codirector of the Florida Governor’s School for Space Science and Technology. I appreciate, value, and hold in reverence the many lessons learned from the extremely bright students whom I have worked with over the past thirty-five years. I owe special thanks to Professor James Gallagher for sparking my initial interest in the gifted and serving as an early mentor and role model while I was still a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. It saddened me to learn, as I was writing this book, that Jim had passed away. I had looked forward to sharing a draft and inviting his feedback.

Others who have inspired my thinking about gifted assessment and who deserve mention for ideas that appear in this volume include Professor Michael Wallach (the importance of “what we measure”), Professor Louis Hsu (“respecting psychometrics”), clinical psychologist Andy Burka (“appreciating and searching for the uniqueness in every client”), test author Jack Naglieri (my mentor early in my career in “test development 101”), and Dr. Maureen Neihart (National Institute of Education, Singapore) and Dr. Pauline Dixon (Newcastle University, England) for helping me experience firsthand the “impact of culture.” Special

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I continue to appreciate and respect the support of my wife, Jan, who graciously permitted me many evenings and weekends away from bike rides, tennis games, and trail runs to write this book.

I dedicate this book, as I did my last book, *Serving the Gifted*,<sup>1</sup> to practitioners who hold an interest in identifying and working with students of high ability. For far too long, school psychologists and other professionals working in the schools have focused the great majority of their time, effort, and creative resources on those students who fall at the lower end of the ability continuum. I hope that *Essentials of Gifted Assessment* helps to focus greater attention on the identification and assessment needs of students of uncommon ability and high potential. I also hope that this volume contributes in some meaningful way to best practices in gifted assessment. One final point: this book isn't about assessing intelligence. It is about the theory and practice underlying assessing giftedness.

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1. *Serving the Gifted* was published in 2013 by Routledge in its School-Based Practice in Action Series.

# **Essentials of Gifted Assessment**



## INTRODUCTION TO GIFTED ASSESSMENT

### WHO ARE THE GIFTED?

At first blush, it might seem as though we can quickly dispense with the question, exactly who are the gifted? If you work in the schools, then you know exactly who they are. The gifted are those students who meet the eligibility criteria that your school district and state have stipulated for this group. And if you are a graduate student in psychology, then you also know who the gifted are. They are those students who have obtained an IQ test score that exceeds a certain threshold, according to what you learned in your assessment of intelligence course. These are the views of a great many practitioners and graduate students, according to a recent national survey (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012) and as gathered from informal conversations at school psychology conferences and workshops here in the United States and also internationally.

As you will quickly learn, however, this book departs from the traditional and some might argue outdated and even archaic view of who the gifted are and suggests a more nuanced perspective of what is meant by giftedness. *High IQ equals gifted* was the view that dominated twentieth-century thinking in both psychology and education. But we are now in a new millennium and have learned much from research in developmental psychology, the cognitive neurosciences, and the talent development field since the early days of gifted education, and this new information better informs our understanding of high-ability students—the gifted (Pfeiffer, 2002, 2003). In the next chapter, we will examine a few models of giftedness that lead to different ways to conceptualize giftedness and define the gifted student. Most would agree that the young child who is reading at age 3, excelling at competitive chess by age 6, or playing the violin in an orchestra at age 10 is gifted. These examples are indicative of children who are developmentally advanced, one hallmark of giftedness (Pfeiffer, 2002, 2012). Most authorities on giftedness agree that academically gifted students are those in the upper 3–5% to 10–15% (the exact range depending on the authority) compared to their same-age peers in general